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ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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THREE CENTURIES

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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BY

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TO THE

REVEREND P. SHULDHAM HENRY, D.D. M.R.I.A.

PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BELFAST,

This Volume

ORIGINALLY COMPILED FOR THE USE OF THE STUDENTS OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE,

Is Inscribed

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE WARM INTEREST

WHICH HE HAS AT ALL TIMES TAKEN IN THE WELFARE OF THE COLLEGE

AND OF GREAT AND CONSTANT KINDNESS

EXPERIENCED BY THE AUTHOR,

C. D. YONGE.

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LECTURES

ON

ENGLISH LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is probably no subject whatever which does not gain or lose in proportion as it is treated in a more or less comprehensive manner. There is perhaps also none to which this observation applies with greater truth and force than the study of literature; because, while literature itself is susceptible of many divisions and subdivisions, there is scarcely a single class or description of pure literature which may not, it might be said must not, derive illustration from other classes; there is not one which does not lose something if studied exclusively by itself; not one which does not derive additional embellishment and attraction by being placed in juxtaposition with, varied by, it may even be contrasted with, some other. This observation seems equally applicable to writings of every kind, whether they be grounded on facts, or whether they be the pure offspring of the fancy and imagination. Even if we take history to be, as it certainly deserves to be accounted, the most important of all branches of literature, it is still too plain to need more than a bare assertion that the work of the historian often has fresh light thrown upon it not only by those kindred artists the orator and the essayist, but by poets also; by epic poets, still more by dramatists, and not unfrequently by satirists. The historian also should have, if not actually some portion of the poetic spirit, at least such an acquaint-

ance with the finest productions of the Muse as may serve to animate himself, and to enable him to display in vigorous or picturesque portraiture those striking periods and events which the annals of every country occasionally present. Since, without such variations from the ordinary sobriety of the narrative, a history would be flat and uninteresting; and uniform tediousness is even more intolerable than an uniform appearance of labour. Poets again, and most especially those of the highest class, epic poets and tragedians, usually presuppose in the reader an acquaintance with the writings of the historian; not unfrequently with those also of the labourer in the paths of science, as (to name a single instance, which the slightest reference to the works of Homer, Virgil and Milton, will abundantly exemplify) of the astronomer. It may be added, that a familiarity with the works of the best prose writers is as serviceable, as necessary, to form or at least to enrich the style of the poet, as a knowledge of great poems is to the prose writers, a fact which was singularly brought out by the acknowledgment of no less a poet than Byron, who, being praised by an eminent critic for his unequalled mastery of our language in all its prodigal richness, which perhaps no other poet has exhibited in an equal degree, attributed it to his early familiarity with the sermons of Jeremy Taylor. The doctrine, therefore, of the connection between poets and prose writers, and their mutual dependence on each other, may, I think, be looked upon as sufficiently established; and may indeed be summed up in the brief rule that he who would attain the highest rank in any species of composition must be acquainted with the most perfect specimens of every kind of literature. It will therefore be very useful to point out first the various divisions into which literature in general, and especially that of our own country, naturally seems to fall, and then to endeavour to direct the attention of the youthful reader to those authors in each section who have most nearly attained excellence.

For the most important admonition of all to be inculcated on students at a time of life when their eagerness for knowledge is (I will not say unfortunately) in advance of their judgment, is to avoid all that is of an inferior class, and to

fix their attention solely on the most perfect specimens of each. Those whose scheme of life and ample fortune enable them to pass their time, if so disposed, in literary leisure, may without injury, nay with a certain degree of profit, pass downwards to second-rate writers, after having mastered the best. But I am addressing myself to those, by far the larger part of every society in every country, to whom literature is a relaxation, not an occupation. And for them it is almost self-evident that, as they cannot read everything, it is best to confine themselves to those authors and to those works which most nearly approach perfection. The excellent, the first-rate writers in each department, will afford a sufficiently wide field of study; and every hour which is devoted to the perusal of authors of inferior power or merit must necessarily be so much time taken from the study of what is better.

The only exception that, as it seems to me, should be made to this rule, is in the case of history. The great, the universal, the paramount interest of the subject, the important position which a knowledge of history must ever occupy, as the groundwork of almost all other literary knowledge, necessitates the exception. For every period of history, even of our own country, is not equally well treated; still less is the history of other nations: of France, of Germany, of Italy, of Spain. And therefore, of historians, the student must often be contented with what is only comparatively good; the best attainable; remembering also that the standard by which we determine the merit of historical works differs from that which we apply to literature of other kinds. We turn to the historians for information as to facts, and therefore must not judge of them by their style so much as by their fidelity and accuracy; but where we can depend upon the soundness of their judgment, their patience in investigating the truth, and their honesty and candour in relating it, we must excuse them if they be somewhat deficient in the graces of composition. We must be contented to trust where we cannot admire; and, if we be called on to make our election between different qualities, must prefer impartiality and truth to vividness and vigour, when purchased at the expense of these more sterling qualities.

But in other departments of literature we should make no such allowances. We must study no oratory but that of the most eloquent statesmen. A middling speaker is at least as great a weariness to men, gods, and the readers of the newspaper columns, as a mediocre poet. To bear us out in passing unheeded the less gifted votaries of the Muse we have the highest classical and critical authority.

Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa.

A middling essayist or a middling preacher is even worse. He not only sends us to sleep, the most innocent effect of his tediousness, but he runs the risk of leading us to impute to his subject the deficiency of interest which of right attaches only to his mode of treating it. With respect to dramatists the case is stronger still. They, writing solely for the sake of amusing and interesting the spectator, are wholly destitute of excuse, and disentitled to toleration, if they fail; as, if insipid, void of character, consistency and vivacity, fail they must.

But sound and universally applicable as this rule is, I am not unaware that there are those who may feel a wish to controvert, if not the rule itself, at least the right of any one person to direct another how he is to apply it, or to dictate to him by what standard he is to measure excellence; and in support of this objection they will quote the old proverb that tastes vary, that the differences of opinion among mankind are as numerous as men themselves. Such arguers mistake the meaning of the adages on which they rely. Certainly tastes differ; that they do so is well not only for the comfort of individuals, but for the benefit of the world at large. The difference of tastes is itself the parent of excellence in all the various arts and sciences which embellish human life. The advantages which all mankind has derived from one man being led by his natural taste, or by what we may call in other words the bent of his genius, to the study of abstract sciences; from another preferring the more practical arts; from a third devoting himself to the more flowery though less fruitful field of literature, is too obvious not to be generally admitted. On the same principle it is well that different students prefer different

classes of composition; one may place prose above poetry, another may assign it by far the lower rank. Again, of prose writers, one may give the palm to the philosophical essayist, others to the historian, to the orator, to the novelist; or in poetry, this reader may dwell with admiration on the grandeur of the epic poet; that one, with inclinations of a lighter cast, may yawn over elaborate works in many books, and may turn from such with eagerness to the airy strains of the lyric minstrel. To this extent tastes may justifiably, nay beneficially, differ, the only condition which a critic or a teacher has a right to exact being that in every case what is so preferred shall be excellent of its kind. But as to what excellence is in the various kinds of composition, there no such license of differing is allowable or even intelligible; though, again, it must be remembered that the qualities which confer excellence in one class of writing are not in every case the same as those which entitle another to high praise; as in nature, the beauty of an animal differs from that of a flower; and, again, as the properties of different animals vary: as we look for strength in the horse, for speed in the deer, for accuracy of scent in one kind of hound, for keenness of vision in another, so do we by no means require the same qualities in writers of different classes, though some points of perfection are of course common to all. That what are beauties in a poet would often be objectionable in a prose writer is sufficiently obvious; but we do not even require the same beauties in all poets, nor in all prose writers. In an epic bard we look chiefly for vigour and grandeur; in a didactic or moral poet for correctness of sentiment and clearness of precept; in a lyric minstrel we expect grace and tenderness. So, again, the copious illustration, the fiery energy of the orator, would be out of place in a history; the easy flow of narrative, mingled with judicious reflection, which we chiefly seek in the pages of the historian, would seem tame and lifeless in a speech whose object is to produce an instant effect on the feelings and passions. On the other hand, there are some qualities which are indispensable to all; some which all can display, and without which, though caprice, fashion, or, perhaps oftener still, the absence for

the moment of any formidable rival, may invest a writer with a temporary popularity, none can achieve a lasting reputation. Such are a thorough understanding and an accurate appreciation of the subject; harmony of the style with the subject; mastery of language; richness and variety of expression; a deep feeling for and correct judgment of the beautiful and the good; fidelity to general character alike in the description of animated or inanimate nature. It is equally undeniable that, in every kind of composition, pomposity, prolixity, irrelevance, inconsistency, homeliness, obscurity, false metaphors, unnatural ornaments, are vices of style carefully to be avoided by the writer, and equally to be shunned by the reader, in spite of the perverted or partial criticisms which would dignify bombast as loftiness, or give to prosy baldness the undeserved honours of simplicity. On these points there is, as I have said, an agreement, so fixed by the general common sense of mankind, that no dissent from it can be allowed. To use the comparison of Burke: 'What appears to be light to one eye appears light to another; what seems sweet to one palate is sweet to another; on the contrary, what is dark or bitter to one man is dark or bitter to another;' and with a still further unanimity, 'all men agree in the effect of these qualities with regard to pleasure and pain; all concur in calling sweetness and light pleasant, sourness, bitterness and darkness unpleasant; and, if any one denied this, we should pronounce his palate vitiated, his organs corrupted, his whole judgment and himself absolutely deranged or mad.'

One more general remark it seems desirable to make, that the criterion by which we estimate the genius of an author differs from that by which we judge of the perfection of his writings. In gauging the ability of the man, we must look at his finest passages, his loftiest bursts of sublimity, his tenderest pathos, his richest efforts of imaginative painting. In rating his work we must have regard at least as much to the just proportions of the whole, to the harmony of the several parts, to the degree in which at times it sinks, as well as to the height to which it occasionally rises.

Writers may be classed in two ways: according to their style and subject, or according to the periods at which they

lived. In other words, we may divide them into writers of prose and writers of poetry; and again we may subdivide the first into historians, orators, essayists and novelists, and the second into epic poets, dramatists, lyric poets, didactic poets; or we may arrange them with reference to the eras in which they lived, as the authors of the reign of Elizabeth, or of Anne, or of George III. It is well to keep both classifications in mind, and to a certain extent to employ both. And therefore I propose to divide the authors whose works we are about to examine into seven classes: dramatists in verse and prose; poets, whom again I shall subdivide into two classes, so as to take lyric poetry separately from that of other kinds; historians; essayists; orators, both in the senate and in the pulpit; and novelists; while the writers in each class I shall take in chronological order.

For students in general our literature may be taken as commencing in the reign of Elizabeth; or, in other words, young students should not be recommended to devote their attention to any writers of an earlier date. It is true indeed that, though, for some centuries after the Conquest, Latin was the language employed by all the votaries of learning in these islands, there were those who, before the close of the fourteenth century, built up for themselves a high reputation as composers of works in the language which was beginning to be called English, a reputation which, in one instance, has survived to the present day. I allude to Geoffrey Chaucer, who, though a layman, attained a degree of learning not surpassed among his contemporaries by any monastic student, being aided by a genius of singular richness and delicacy. Fertile in invention, acute in observation, he set his countrymen an example of felicity of expression which, in all likelihood, could not have been without its fruit in exciting successful imitation, had not, in the first place, the minds of men been turned in another direction by the troubles which shortly afterwards fell on the land; and had not, secondly, the language itself been so greatly altered in the latter part of the next century, as to prevent his diction from being looked upon as a model. Nor was Chaucer the only poet who in that age courted the Muse in his own tongue. A Scotch minstrel, John Bar-

bour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, wrote as nearly as possible at the same time; and his poem on the exploits of the Bruce contains passages of a noble and peculiarly classical spirit.

> We for our lyvys,
> And for our childee and for our wyvys,
> And for our fredome, and for our land
> As strengeit into battle stand,[1]

reads like a translation of Æschylus.[1]

But the study of works of this age belongs rather to the antiquarian than to the modern scholar. The language, at the end of the fourteenth century, when Chaucer wrote, was in a state of transition, differing so greatly in inflection, and even in grammar, from our present usage, that Hallam speaks of it as 'an old obsolete English which went out of use about the accession of Edward IV.'[2] And our business is with modern English: that which we use at the present day, and which in the last three centuries has undergone but little alteration. Within that period all our greatest writers have lived; and it would be but a waste of time to go back from them, and to their exclusion, to the works of others, which, however curious and interesting as indications of the gradual growth and progress of the language, and however admirable as proofs of the power of genius to surmount the greatest difficulties and hindrances (for Chaucer and Barbour lived before the invention of printing, and therefore knowledge had unrolled for them but few of her stores), are nevertheless not examples of English as it exists now. And we must keep in view what has been the principal object which has influenced those who of late have so strongly urged the addition of the study of English literature to the courses formerly adopted at schools and colleges. They have evidently hoped that, by acquiring a correct knowledge of the structure and grammar of the English language, and by devoting a fair portion of time

[1] Compare Æschylus:—

> Ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἴτε,
> ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ', ἐλευθεροῦτε δὲ
> παῖδας, γυναῖκας, θεῶν τε πατρῴων ἕδη.
> θήκας τε προγόνων· νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών.—*Persæ* 403.

and labour to the study of the works of its greatest masters in their respective lines, students should themselves attain a facility and correctness in the use of that language; should write with purity and elegance, it may be letters, it may be essays, it may in future time be sermons, or (where nature and enthusiasm lend their inspiration) it may be poetry. But, whatever may be the species of composition which they select, it is clear that their models must be sought for among those who have written since our language was brought into its present form; and therefore, however worthy he may be of the attention of ripe scholars, I shall for the present pass over Chaucer. And, though he flourished in the very reign in which I have placed the commencement of modern English literature, yet, as a writer, Spenser resembles the older bard in one point too closely to be separated from him. Spenser's richness of imagination, delicacy of sentiment, and vivid brilliancy of description, would indeed place him in the very front rank, if he had not himself, with a deliberate perverseness of taste or, to say the least, a wilful and wayward disdain of popularity, shut up his writings from the ordinary reader by an adoption of what even his own learned contemporary, Ben Jonson, calls Chaucerisms, the old forms of the language, that is, which had been used by Chaucer, but which had long become obsolete, and which, except to the studious few, were already unintelligible; indeed in another passage Jonson complains that Spenser had not really understood the antique style which he professed to imitate; but, in copying the ancients, had written what was in fact 'no language at all.' The desultory intricacy of the allegory which forms the plot of his principal poem, the 'Fairy Queen,' is perhaps an equal drawback to its attaining any general favour. At all events the two causes combined always have prevented, and always will prevent, his works from being extensively studied; and, though it is recorded of Gray that he made a practice of reading over a portion of them whenever he desired to attune his own genius to composition, still to minds of any other frame they must in general be so useless as a model, that I do not propose to include Spenser in the list of

those writers of whom I design to present sketches and specimens.[1]

SHAKESPEARE.

A.D. 1564–1616.

IN any classification of English writers, Shakespeare, in the division to which he belongs, must come first. But in respect to him it is impossible to follow the plan which in general it seems desirable to pursue with other authors, of giving a short sketch of his personal history, since the most careful research has failed to ascertain anything more than the following bare outline of his career; and it must be added that the authority for portions of that is so slight that even of the circumstances which seem to be the best ascertained some have been doubted, others positively denied; though more perhaps because, to the zeal of his admirers, they seem inconsistent with their enthusiastic reverence for their idol, than because they have any more trustworthy account to substitute.

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire, on St. George's Day, 1564. He was the eldest son of a tradesman of some importance in so small a town; indeed, in some accounts, his father is described as a merchant; and, at one time, was one of the municipal magistrates, though, during his son's boyhood, he appears to have fallen into difficulties, so that he was forced to resign the office of alderman. And William himself, as he grew up, got into trouble for poaching on the deer-park of Sir Thomas Lucy, the great man of the district, and was, in consequence, obliged to quit the neighbourhood, and to remove to London, to escape prosecution. There, for a time, he seems to have led a hard life. When he was only eighteen he had married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a neighbouring yeoman; and he was reduced, on first reaching the metropolis, to support himself and his wife by working, according to one tradition, as a call-boy, or prompter's servant, at one of the theatres; according to another story,

[1] But biographical sketches of Chaucer and Spenser, with extracts from their works, are added in an Appendix to Chapter III.

by the still more precarious employment of holding the horses of the gallants who rode down of an afternoon to see the play. Whichever was his occupation, it seems to have introduced him to the notice of the actors, through the interest of some of whom he was made known to the manager, and promoted to tread the stage himself. Here he soon made two discoveries: one, that he was not highly qualified to shine as a performer; the other, of far greater importance, that he had a genius, such as the world has produced no equal example of, for writing plays, which others should perform under his instruction. As an author he not only became instantly famous beyond all his contemporaries and predecessors, but he also earned a fortune sufficient to enable him, after a few years, to become the proprietor of one of the principal theatres, the Globe; and, when he had barely reached middle age, to return to his native town, and settle there in the enjoyment of a respectable competency. There, on his fifty-second birthday, he died, leaving two daughters and a widow, who, however, seems to have lost her hold on his affections, as we may judge from his at first omitting all mention of her in his will, and, when reminded of her claims upon him, bequeathing her nothing beyond a legacy which was hardly of a complimentary, much less of an affectionate character, his 'second best bed and furniture.' He had had one son, who died in his boyhood. His daughters both married well, and had children; but neither of them had any grandchildren; and, before the end of the century, the great dramatist's family was extinct.

This is but little to be able to tell of him whom, with a rare unanimity, all admit to be the chief glory of our English literature. Yet it is all that we know. Attempts have been made by some of his editors to frame what might be called a sort of literary biography of him by arranging his plays in the order of their composition or representation, but the ill-success of those who have made the attempt is proved by the extent to which they differ. One tragedy, 'Macbeth,' is indeed so proved by internal evidence to have been written subsequently to the accession of the Scottish king to the English throne, that all unite in fixing that

play to the year 1606. But as to his other works, except that the 'Tempest,' 'Twelfth Night,' and 'Othello' are generally regarded as among the very latest, and the dramas founded on Roman history as but little earlier, the disagreement could hardly be wider. No aid is to be obtained from the conduct of Shakespeare himself, since he was either so indifferent to posthumous fame,[1] or so modest in his own appreciation of his writings, that he gave himself no trouble about their publication; and, though a few of them were published in his lifetime by the booksellers, it seems to have been done without any concert with him, and certainly without his bestowing any pains on their revision and correction. So that of the history of his plays, as well as of himself, we must be content to remain in comparative ignorance.

But if biographers have found little to say about Shakespeare, on the other hand no writer has ever existed who has furnished so inexhaustible a theme for critics. While, without endorsing the biting sarcasm of a great writer of the present day that, as a general rule, critics are men who have tried their own hands at original composition only to fail in it, we may fairly say that he has been far more fortunate than usual in his judges, since those who in his case have taken that office on themselves are for the most part among the most brilliant and renowned ornaments of our literary annals: Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Scott, Campbell, and Hallam, have left names so universally esteemed as to raise a strong presumption in favour of the correctness of their judgment when they agree, and to command respect even if in any points we may feel constrained to differ from them. Four of them are among our most exquisite poets; the other two are of the very highest estimation for many of the qualities which give the greatest weight to writings in prose. And all of them, poets as

[1] Coleridge (Biog. Lit. i. p. 33) quotes some of Shakespeare's sonnets, to prove that he was not unconscious of his claims to immortal fame. But the very sonnet he quotes, though it speaks of the 'virtue of his pen' as able to embalm his friend, does also say—

> 'Your name from hence immortal fame shall have,
> Though I, once gone, to all the world must die.'

well as prose writers, agree in ascribing to Shakespeare a genius equalled by no predecessor or successor; though, as might be expected from the great diversity that exists between the characters of the critics themselves, they assign different, though not inconsistent, grounds for their homage. Availing ourselves in some degree of the guidance of them all, we may pronounce in the first place that if, as I think must be confessed, Shakespeare had but slight acquaintance with any language except his own,[1] there yet never was any poet who could so well dispense with adventitious aid; and that, in one point of view, his ignorance of classical literature was even of actual advantage to him, since he might otherwise have been led to take the works of the great dramatists of classical antiquity for models, and to fetter his genius by an attempt to imitate others instead of drawing solely on his own unassisted and unfettered genius. For, in entering on the career of a dramatist, Shakespeare was launching his barque on what he must, in a great degree, have looked upon as an untried ocean. The very earliest compositions in our language which can be called dramas had been composed since the accession of Elizabeth; and, if Malone be correct in believing that the first part of 'Henry VI.' was written the year after the destruction of the Armada, only a quarter of a century had elapsed since the very first play, which was neither a Mystery nor a Morality, had been exhibited on the public stage,[2] when Shakespeare first appeared on it as an author; and none of the works produced in this brief interval deserved to be remembered after they had served their turn; or gave any indication that England was about to vindicate to herself the pre-

[1] Johnson, in his preface to Shakespeare, points out that in the story of Romeo and Juliet, he is observed to have followed the English translation wherever it deviates from the Italian original, and that the only Latin play from which he has borrowed anything (the 'Menæchmi' of Plautus) was also the only classical play which at that time existed in an English translation; very curious coincidences, if, as has been contended, he understood both Italian and Latin.

[2] 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' was acted by the students of Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1564; and 'Gordobuc, or Ferrex and Porrex,' by the students of the Inner Temple, not above a year or two earlier.

eminence in dramatic composition, a superiority over even the grand Athenian literature, a faithful imitation of which his French contemporaries confessed to be so far beyond their power, that their highest aim was to copy the Romans,[1] as and because the Romans had copied the Greeks.

Yet, to the glory of having won this triumph for his native land, Shakespeare has a claim which is hardly contested by the critics of any nation but these same French, still bowing in slavish obedience to the dictates of Boileau, and recognising no other standard of excellence but the code into which he enlarged the brief rules or principles which he imagined himself to have found in Aristotle. Whether the great Athenian dramatists did really regulate their practice of their art by the laws which the logical Stagyrite deduced from their works or not, it is quite certain that Shakespeare followed no laws but those prescribed by his own genius, his own innate sense of propriety, taking that word in the very widest sense for all that was suitable to the work he had before him, in whatever aspect it could be regarded; and recognised no rules of composition which did not approve themselves to his own untrammelled reason. It is to no pedantic adherence to any fixed system that he owes his unrivalled and increasing fame, but to qualities as far superior to any technical knowledge or skill as nature is superior to art, to his deep insight into the heart of man in whatever rank, and under whatever circumstances he deals with him; to his exact appreciation of every emotion or passion by which man's feelings are agitated, or man's conduct is governed. Indeed, it may be questioned whether this universality or versatility of comprehension was not his greatest and most distinctive attribute. It is a great triumph for the human intellect to portray with all the vividness of reality the horrors of insanity, the fierce audacity of guilt and sometimes of despair, the remorseful cruelty of jealousy, the endurance and self-devotion of patriotism, the stern fortitude and fiery energy of warlike ambition, the unswerving resolution of hatred and revenge: but our admiration is

[1] Du Bellay, a French writer under Henry II., urges his countrymen to copy the Romans, as the Romans had copied the Greeks.

immeasurably increased if the mind which is capable of successfully grappling with these grander topics can range with equal power in another and an opposite direction; if it can with equal fidelity set before us the ardour and anxieties of love, the devotion of filial duty, the grace and delicacy of female purity, the divine beauty of compassion, the nobleness of resignation under calamity and disgrace; the feeling is augmented still further if to the vigour exerted in delineations of the one class, and to the tenderness displayed in those of the other, be added philosophy to instruct, wit and humour to amuse; and if, beyond these qualities, which are mainly the fruit of keen observation and intelligence, an original and creative imagination at times transports the poet within the boundaries of the invisible world, and enables him to 'turn into shape' and bring before the reader or spectator 'the forms of things unknown;' and if, lastly, this combination of mental endowments be set off by technical skill, by a mastery of the resources of the language which should enable the author to display and embellish them with all the felicity of a rich and varied diction and musical versification, it would be difficult to conceive what more could be required to entitle him in whom these gifts might be found to the glory of having attained as great perfection as the finite faculties of man can arrive at. Yet it is not too much to say that they all do meet in Shakespeare, and that even this long enumeration does not exhaust the catalogue of his claims on our attention and admiration: nay, perhaps, in the eyes of those who regard chiefly the artistic skill of the dramatist, it does not include the highest of all, the union of fearless boldness and unerring correctness displayed in his delineation of character. His vehemence may at times swell into bombast, his wit may not unfrequently degenerate into that paltry play upon words which was the fashion of his day; or, still worse, may be tainted with coarseness and indecency; but no Zoilus has ever discovered a flaw in the consummate art with which he sets before us not only each separate character, but all the chief characters in each play, so combining and contrasting them that they serve to bring out each other's peculiarities. So great was

his capacity for transporting himself into every situation, and identifying himself with every disposition, that, in whatever conjuncture any of his personages are placed, they invariably conduct themselves in it according to the general laws of nature; they never seem to do or say anything merely on account of the audience; and yet the poet, by their conduct and language, communicates to the spectator or the reader the faculty of looking, as it were, into the most secret recesses of their minds, so that Göethe has ingeniously compared his characters to watches in crystal cases, which not only tell the time correctly, but, at the same time, enable us to perceive the inward springs by which this end is accomplished.

I have spoken of his extraordinary versatility; and it must always be remembered that he is the first writer in any language who ever attempted to shine both in tragedy and comedy. Plato, indeed, represents Socrates as contending that every tragic poet of the first class must have within him the qualities requisite to enable him to excel in comedy also; because, as he lays it down, opposites can only be understood by and through each other; and, consequently, we can only feel what is grand and serious if we know also what is mirth-provoking and laughable. He was probably thinking of the satyric drama of his countryman; but that corresponded to the modern burlesques rather than to any other kind of composition. It had certainly no claim to the dignified name of comedy; and no dramatist of ancient days apparently regarded the assertion, even though supported by two such philosophers, as anything better than an ingenious paradox. Certainly, none ever tried to exemplify its truth by his own practice. That, as well as other triumphs, was reserved for the poet who could draw Lear as well as Falstaff; Benedick or Malvolio, as truthfully as Hamlet or Macbeth.

His example was followed by many of our own dramatists in the course of the next century; not one of whom, however, can be said to have succeeded in both; and by the great French tragedian, Racine, who, in his 'Plaideurs,' imitated the 'Wasps' of Aristophanes, but who, apparently, was not very well pleased with his own performance, since he never repeated the experiment. But Shakespeare's

triumph in both has been so complete that his warmest panegyrists have doubted which style was the most suited to his natural genius. It is singular that he abstains from one source of attraction on which comic writers in general mainly rely: the portrayal of the manners of his own age and country, which, as being such, are of necessity the most easily apprehended by, and most keenly appreciated by the audience. For the scene of his comedies is mostly laid in Italy; and, when he introduces a comic English character on the stage, he places him in an earlier generation of very different habits. Yet he has surmounted this drawback so completely that we never perceive it to be one: or, it may be more correct to say, so universal, so natural, so thoroughly human, was his genius, that the situations in which he places the personages in his comedies are as appropriate to the time and place of their first representation as to the era or region in which the scene is laid, and to the present day as to that of their original composition. For

He was not of an age, but of all time.

That there are occasional blemishes in his works it would be vain to deny. Indeed it is an injudicious eulogy that represents any man, or work of man, as absolutely faultless; and does not content itself with showing the defects to be so far outnumbered and outweighed by the excellences as not to deserve to be taken into serious account. And with such a feeling we may certainly regard and speak of the flaws in Shakespeare; too few and too insignificant to be put into the scale for a moment against the variety and greatness of the beauties which have been enumerated. We may agree with Schlegel that it is a not impermissible license in a poet to transfer lions and deadly serpents, the accredited horrors of all forests, to the Ardennes, though it certainly had been free from such monsters for ages before the date of 'As You Like It;' but when he represents Hamlet as having studied at Wittenberg, where no university was founded till Hamlet had been centuries in the grave; when he makes Richard III. quote Machiavelli, though the subtle author of 'Il Principe' was a boy at school when the Great Hunchback fell

at Bosworth; and when he makes ships land their crews in Bohemia; we can certainly not conclude with the acute but enthusiastic German that Shakespeare committed all these blunders, knowing them to be such, 'of set purpose and deliberately;' but we set them down to the deficiencies of his early education, and while doing so admit at the same time that they in no degree affect the real merits of the pieces in which they occur; and that, if they are spots in the sun, they yet cause no visible diminution of his lustre. The obscurity of some of his expressions and sentences is a far greater blemish, which cannot always be explained as arising from errors of the copyist or the printer. Probably this also must be imputed to the same cause as the slips in geography and chronology, and may also be passed over on the same ground, since it fortunately happens that the sentences which can neither be understood as they stand, nor be corrected with any probability, occur for the most part in comparatively unimportant scenes, and in scarcely one instance spoil the effect of his grand speeches or interesting situations.

CHAPTER II.

SHAKESPEARE—continued.

A.D. 1564–1616.

It is absolutely impossible, by isolated quotations, to give the faintest idea of the pre-eminent merit of Shakespeare. It is difficult to do so with writers of other classes, so that Johnson has compared the critic who attempts such a task to the man mentioned by the old Greek anecdote-monger, who, being desirous to sell his house, pulled a brick out of the wall, and took it into the market-place. And it must be harder so to deal with a dramatist than with any other writer, because there is no other whose work so imperatively requires to be judged as a whole. The suitableness of any speech to the personage in whose mouth it is put cannot be fairly estimated unless we take into our view all the other occurrences in the play which throw a light on the speaker's character. The propriety of any situation, the humour of any complication, still more requires that we should have all the surrounding circumstances in view, that we may be able adequately and fairly to appreciate them. It must therefore be recollected that to present detached scenes, or parts of scenes, as specimens of his genius and art, is to exhibit Shakespeare at a great disadvantage; but it may be hoped that the passages so presented will prove sufficiently attractive to induce a study of his different plays in their entirety.

We will begin with the first of that series of dramas on the history of England, to which so many readers in former generations were chiefly indebted for their notions of many of the most important events and characters in our annals. I have mentioned the truthful vigour with which the patriot and the warrior speak in his pages. The Bastard Faulconbridge in 'King John' is both patriot and warrior.

And it is in a fine strain of manly eloquence that he tries to inspire his base sovereign with courage, when John is trembling at the report that—

> London hath received
> Like a kind host the Dauphin and his powers;

and that the English nobles

> are gone
> To offer service to the enemy.

I should remark, in passing, that in this play, as afterwards (in a lesser degree) in 'Henry IV.,' the poet does injustice to one of the great men of our early history. The Hubert who in this scene is called 'a villain,' and, in a former act,

> A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
> Quoted, and signed, to do a deed of shame,

so that it was his 'abhorred aspect' that had tempted John to his foulest actions, was in reality the great justiciary Hubert de Burgh, to whom John's son was as deeply indebted as to any baron in the land for the expulsion of the French and the peaceful enjoyment of his kingdom.

The desertion of the nobles had been caused by their discovery of the death of Arthur, whom Hubert, in a previous scene of great power, had assured John that he had forborne to destroy, though the king had commanded his murder.

> *K. John.* That villain Hubert told me he did live.
> *Bast.* So, on my soul, he did, for aught he knew.
> But wherefore do you droop? Why look you sad?
> Be great in act, as you have been in thought;
> Let not the world see fear, and sad distrust
> Govern the motion of a kingly eye:
> Be stirring as the time; be fire with fire;
> Threaten the threat'ner, and outface the brow
> Of bragging horror; so shall inferior eyes,
> That borrow their behaviour from the great
> Grow great by your example; and put on
> The dauntless spirit of resolution.
> Away; and glister like the god of war,
> When he intendeth to become the field:
> Show boldness, and aspiring confidence;
> What, shall they seek the lion in his den,
> And fright him there? and make him tremble there?
> O, let it not be said!—Forage, and run

To meet displeasure further from the doors;
And grapple with him, ere he come so nigh.
K. John. The Legate of the Pope hath been with me,
And I have made a happy peace with him;
And he hath promised to dismiss the powers
Led by the Dauphin.
Bast. O inglorious league!
Shall we, upon the footing of our land,
Send fair-play orders, and make compromise,
Insinuation, parley, and base truce,
To arms invasive? Shall a beardless boy,
A cocker'd silken wanton, brave our fields,
And flesh his spirit in a warlike soil,
Mocking the air with colours idly spread,
And find no check? Let us, my liege, to arms.

In a subsequent play, where the speaker, a brave man, speaks to brave men, his tone is even more noble. Everyone recollects the circumstances that preceded the battle of Agincourt; how Henry V. had invaded France with an army wholly disproportioned to such an enterprise; and how at last, on October 24, the eve of St. Crispin's day, he found himself confronted by a host of which the cavalry alone outnumbered his whole force. He himself would willingly have avoided a conflict in which success appeared almost hopeless, and volunteered proposals of peace, but the French princes were too confident of triumph to grant him such as he deemed consistent with his honour. He was compelled, therefore, to prepare to risk all on the chance of a battle; and, as great men always feel, his courage and the resources of his mind rose with the demands made upon them. It was not strange, however, that among his officers some who had less responsibility should have a less buoyant spirit; nor, indeed, that there should not be a general wish that some of their comrades who were still in England were now standing by their side; and Shakespeare accordingly gives us the expression of such a wish by one who was no faint-hearted warrior, and the king's reproof of it.

(Henry V. Act iv. Sc. iii.)

Westmoreland. O that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England,
That do no work to-day!

K. Henry. What's he, that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
If we were marked to die, we are enough
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more,
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold;
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not, if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But, if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, 'faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me,
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more:
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he, which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,
And crowns for convoy put into his purse;
We would not die in that man's company,
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is call'd the feast of Crispian:
He, that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He, that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his friends,
And say To-morrow is saint Crispian:
Then will he strip his sleeve, and show his scars,
And say, these wounds I had on Crispian's day.
Old men forget, yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember, with advantages,
What feats he did that day: then shall our names,
Familiar in their mouths as household words,—
Harry the king, Bedford, and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloster,—
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd:
This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered:
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he, to-day, that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England, now a-bed,
Shall think themselves accursed, they were not here;
And hold their manhoods cheap, while any speaks,
That fought with us upon St. Crispin's day.

It may be unnecessary to point out that 'to gentle his condition' means to raise him to the rank of gentleman; but it is worth noticing how, while giving expression to the resolution of his own unconquerable spirit, the king mingles with it the motives most powerful to animate his followers; the prospect of immortal fame, contrasted with the shame of him who, fearing to die in his company, would take money for his passage home and desert his comrades; and not only glory for those already noble and illustrious, but advancement and honour for those who as yet are but of lowly rank. We have seen the lifelike utterances of courage which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of heroes. We may contrast with them the expressions of despair extorted from one whose fault was not so much timidity as levity and irresolution; and who now, feeling his sceptre falling from his grasp, and his dignity if not his life menaced by a kinsman at once bold, perfidious, and unscrupulous, might well feel almost unmanned and hopeless. Intelligence has reached him of the progress of Bolingbroke, and of the sad fate of some of his own adherents who had fallen into his hands, and been executed as having given their sovereign pernicious advice; and after such a disaster a weak man may well see no comfort.

(Richard II. Act iii. Sc. ii.)

Aumerle. Where is the duke my father, with his power?
K. Richard. No matter where; of comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
Let's choose executors, and talk of wills:
And yet not so,—for what can we bequeath,
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all, are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own, but death;
And that small model of the barren earth,

Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:—
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have depos'd!
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping kill'd;
All murder'd:—For within the hollow crown,
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps death his court: and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state; and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene
To monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,—
As if this flesh, which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable; and, humour'd thus,
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while;
I live with bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
Need friends:—Subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?

Of wit and humour Shakespeare has given us an infinite variety. We have the wit of high-breeding, or what was then accounted such, in Benedick and Beatrice, whose conversation is more lively raillery than very sparkling brilliancy of idea. And as a contrast to it we have the jovial, boisterous, ever ready recklessness, of Falstaff. We have the more deliberate wit of jesters by profession, such as Touchstone, the nameless fools in 'Lear' and 'Twelfth Night;' and the unconscious humour of ignorant boors, such as Bottom or Dogberry; while in theatrical effect, perhaps, no contest of repartee or playfulness of set description surpasses the scenes in which bragging cowardice is brought to shame, as Pistol by Fluellen; or vanity like Malvolio's, held up as a jest even to men who are not much wiser than himself. We will first take Benedick and Beatrice, the hero and heroine of 'Much Ado about Nothing;' both the gentleman and the lady are of similar tempers, professed enemies to love, while in reality each cherishes a secret liking for

the other; and each has railed so much about matrimony as to be ashamed to own or to show it.

Beatrice is the niece of Leonato, Governor of Messina, and her first meeting with Benedick in the play is where he comes in the train of Don Pedro, the Prince of Aragon, to pay his respects to her uncle; her cousin Hero, Leonato's daughter, is likewise present, and Benedick cannot forbear addressing to his prince some eulogistic remarks on her beauty, on which Beatrice, who apparently has sufficient fancy for him to be somewhat jealous, breaks in.

(Act i. Sc. i.)

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick; nobody marks you.

Bene. What, my dear lady Disdain! are you yet living?

Beat. Is it possible disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

Bene. Then is courtesy a turn-coat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart, for truly, I love none.

Beat. A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me.

Bene. God keep your ladyship still in that mind, so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

Beat. Scratching could not make it worse were it such a face as yours were.

Bene. Well you are a rare parrot-teacher.

Beat. A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

Bene. I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer: but keep your way o' God's name: I have done.

Beat. You always end with a jade's trick—I know you of old.

A jade is an animal easily tired. In a subsequent scene we have a soliloquy of Benedick in denunciation of love. Claudio, his bosom friend, is in love with Hero; but Benedick has no belief that the woman exists on earth who can induce him to commit himself in like manner.

(Act ii. Sc. iii.)

Bene. Boy.

Boy. Signor.

Bene. In my chamber window lies a book; bring it hither to me in the orchard.

Boy. I am here already, sir.

Bene. I know that; but I would have thee hence and here again. I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he has laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love. And such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe; I have known when he would have walked ten mile a-foot to see a good armour, and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain, and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now he is turned orthographer: his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted, and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair; yet I am well: another is wise; yet I am well: another virtuous; yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be whatever colour it please God. Ha! the prince and monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

He does not, however, hide himself as effectually as he imagines. Monsieur Love, that is, Claudio, sees him, and gives a hint of his position to Don Pedro, who, knowing that Benedick is within hearing, leads Leonato to talk of his niece's real love for Benedick, in spite of her 'in all outward behaviours and seeming ever to abhor him.' 'She swears she will never make known her affections to him.' Claudio adds that she takes on so that Hero is 'sometimes afraid she will do herself a desperate outrage,' and Hero says, 'she will die if he love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known.' Leonato's speech was no trick, though Pedro's leading him on to make it, and the observations with which Claudio corroborates it, are; and Benedick, hearing the tale, is softened.

BENEDICK *advances from the arbour.*

Bene. This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady; it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say, I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too, that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. —I did never think to marry: I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair: 'tis a truth I can bear them witness: and virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me: By my troth, it is no addition to her wit; nor no great argument for her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage. But doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain, awe a man from the career of his humour? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married. Here comes Beatrice: by this day, she's a fair lady; I do spy some marks of love in her.

Enter BEATRICE.

Beat. Against my will, I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

Bene. Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

Beat. I took no more pains for those thanks, than you take pains to thank me; if it had been painful I would not have come.

Bene. You take pleasure in the message?

Beat. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal:—You have no stomach, Signor; fare you well. [*Exit.*

Bene. Ha! Against my will I am sent to bid you come to dinner—there's a double meaning in that. I took no more pains for those thanks, than you took pains to thank me—that's as much as to say, any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks:—If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

From these dissembling lovers we may fitly proceed to those who did not disguise their affections. Romeo and Juliet, the son and daughter of two unfriendly families in Verona, who nevertheless have found to make such acquaintance as has proved sufficient to inspire them with

ardent mutual love. Romeo, like a faithful wooer, ventures into her father's garden by night to speak with her at her window; and poetry has never clothed the aspirations of true love with more exquisite imagery than he addresses to his mistress, nor is the lady insensible to his eloquent passion.

(Romeo and Juliet, Act ii. Sc. ii.)

Enter ROMEO.

Rom. He jests at scars, that never felt a wound.
[*Juliet appears above, at a window.*
But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!—
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she:
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.—
It is my lady; O, it is my love:
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing: What of that?
Her eye discourses, I will answer it.—
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright,
That birds would sing, and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!
Juliet. Ah me!
Rom. She speaks:—
O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white upturned wond'ring eyes
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

. . . . . .

Juliet. Thou know'st, the mask of night is on my face;
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek,
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke; but farewell compliment!
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say—Ay;
And I will take thy word: yet, if thou swear'st,
Thou may'st prove false; at lovers' perjuries,
They say, Jove laughs. O, gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully,
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond;
And therefore thou may'st think my haviour light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me;
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

But woman is not always uncertain, coy, and hard to please like Beatrice, nor ardent and passionate like Juliet. The affection of a mother is deeper than that of any maiden, however beloved and loving; her distress, if the treasure on which her heart is set, her child, be reft from her, more painful and more touching than even the despair which leads such a maiden to immolate herself on the dead body of him whose she had hoped to be in life, but who finds that she can only be united to him by death. And the mother's love and agony are depicted with painful lifelikeness in the lamentation of Constance for her son Arthur, who, she doubts not, has either been put to death by his uncle, John of England, or is in his power so completely that no hope can be entertained of his being allowed to live.

(King John, Act iii. Sc. iv.)

King Philip. Bind up your hairs.
Constance. Yes, that I will; and wherefore will I do it?
I tore them from their bonds; and cried aloud,
O that these hands could so redeem my son,
As they have given these hairs their liberty!

But now I envy at their liberty,
And will again commit them to their bonds,
Because my poor child is a prisoner.—
And, father cardinal, I have heard you say,
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
If that be true, I shall see my boy again;
For, since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born.
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
And he will look as hollow as a ghost;
As thin and meagre as an ague's fit;
And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven,
I shall not know him: therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.
Pandulph. You hold too heinous a respect of grief.
Constance. He talks to me, that never had a son.

'Too heinous a respect of' grief seems to mean, to cherish grief to such excess as to be hardly excusable.

Pandulph, as a Roman ecclesiastic, was forbidden to marry and become a father, and therefore could not possibly sympathise with a bereaved mother. There is no more subtle touch of nature in all Constance's lamentation; none but those who have been in her position are entitled even to judge of her grief; and when Philip in some degree endorses Pandulph's reproof, the simile with which she replies to the king, endowing her very sorrow with the personality of her child, is an exquisite specimen of the union of poetry with the deepest feeling.

K. Philip. You are as fond of grief as of your child.
Constance. Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
Then, have I reason to be fond of grief.
Fare you well: had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.—
I will not keep this form upon my head,
[*Tearing off her head-dress.*

When there is such disorder in my wit.
O lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son!
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!
My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's care!

We have seen Benedick's wit, such as we may be sure was fashionable in the days of Elizabeth, though it is somewhat too unceremonious, too wanting in respect for the sex to be quite in keeping with the chivalrous feelings that ought to animate a high-bred noble. But the scenes in which Falstaff is brought on the stage are more widely celebrated as specimens of wit than probably any passages in any play that ever was written. It is curious why Shakespeare should have chosen for his dissolute old braggart the name of one who, so far from deserving such a character, was in fact one of the most gallant knights who upheld the credit of the English arms in France during the infancy of Henry VI., for the real Falstaff was the commander who defeated the very bravest of the French knights, the celebrated Dunois, in the battle of Herrings. And in the way of doing justice, at the same time, to one of our most brilliant national heroes, I may point out that the irregularity and license of Henry's own conduct are unduly exaggerated by the poet. Even in 'Richard II.' (Act v. Sc. ii.) Shakespeare represents Bolingbroke as grieving over 'his unthrifty son' frequenting 'the taverns' with 'his unrestrained loose companions, beating the watch and robbing the passengers,' though he was then a boy of but eleven years old. And though the general tradition of his youthful excesses cannot but have had some foundation, it is clear that he was actually employed in the command of his father's army during a great part of the time that he is represented as rioting in London. But we must not blame too severely an exaggeration for which we are indebted to some of the richest comedy which any language can boast. As the prince is portrayed to us in the play of 'Henry IV.,' he is the head of a party of boon companions, of which Falstaff is the chief; of the others, Bardolph and Gadshill are copies of the worst part of Falstaff's character, drunken and cowardly; Poins is more like the Prince himself, a roisterer, but frank and fearless, with a just scorn of the braggart humour of his

mates. And he is introduced proposing to the whole party a robbery of some pilgrims about to go 'to Canterbury with rich offerings' for the shrine of Thomas-à-Beckett; his secret plan being, as he subsequently explains to the prince, that the prince and he shall fail in keeping their appointment with the rest; and when the others have accomplished the robbery, the prince and he shall set upon them and carry off the booty. He has provided 'visors and cases of buckram;' and in reply to a question whether the four 'will not be too hard for them,' he answers:—

(First Part of King Henry IV. Act i. Sc. ii.)

Poins. Well, for two of them, I know them to be as true-bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fights longer than he sees reason, I'll forswear arms. The virtue of this jest will be the incomprehensible lies that this same fat rogue will tell us when we meet at supper: how thirty, at least, he fought with; what words, what blows, what extremities he endured; and in the reproof of this lies the jest.

The plot succeeds exactly as Poins has designed it, and its development is related in the following scene. The Prince and Poins are sitting at supper at their favourite Boar's-head, Eastcheap, when Falstaff and the rest come in.

(Act ii. Sc. iv.)

Poins. Welcome, Jack. Where hast thou been?

Falstaff. A plague of all cowards, I say, and a vengeance too! Marry, and amen! Give me a cup of sack, boy.—Ere I lead this life long, I'll sew netherstocks, and mend them, and foot them too. A plague of all cowards! Give me a cup of sack, rogue. Is there no virtue extant? [*He drinks.*

P. Henry. Did'st thou never see Titan kiss a dish of butter? pitiful-hearted Titan, that melted at the sweet tale of the sun! If thou did'st, then behold that compound.

Falstaff. You rogue, here's lime in this sack too: There is nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man: Yet a coward is worse than a cup of sack with lime in it, a villainous coward.—Go thy ways, old Jack; die when thou wilt, if manhood, good manhood, be not forgot upon the face of the earth, then am I a shotten herring. There live not three good men unhang'd in England; and one of them is fat, and grows old: God help the while! A bad world, I say! I would I were a weaver; I could sing psalms or anything: a plague of all cowards, I say still.

P. Henry. How now, woolsack? what mutter you?

Falstaff. A king's son! If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath, and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of wild geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more. You prince of Wales!

P. Henry. Why, you great round man! what's the matter?

Falstaff. Are you not a coward? answer me to that; and Poins there?

Poins. 'Zounds, ye fat paunch, an ye call me coward, I'll stab thee.

Falstaff. I call thee coward? I'll see thee damned ere I call thee coward: but I would give a thousand pound I could run as fast as thou canst. You are straight enough in the shoulders, you care not who sees your back: call you that backing of your friends? A plague upon such backing! give me them that will face me. Give me a cup of sack:—I am a rogue if I drunk to-day.

P. Henry. O villain! thy lips are scarce wiped since thou drunk'st last.

Falstaff. All's one for that. A plague of all cowards, still say I. [*He drinks.*

P. Henry. What's the matter?

Falstaff. What's the matter? there be four of us here have ta'en a thousand pound this morning.

P. Henry. Where is it, Jack? where is it?

Falstaff. Where is it? taken from us it is: a hundred upon poor four of us.

P. Henry. What, a hundred, man?

Falstaff. I am a rogue if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am eight times thrust through the doublet; four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw, *ecce signum.* I never dealt better since I was a man: all would not do. A plague of all cowards!—Let them speak: if they speak more or less than truth they are villains, and the sons of darkness.

P. Henry. Speak, sirs; how was it?

Gadshill. We four set upon some dozen,—

Falstaff. Sixteen, at least, my lord.

Gadshill. And bound them.

Peto. No, no, they were not bound.

Falstaff. You rogue, they were bound, every man of them; or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew.

Gadshill. As we were sharing, some six or seven fresh men set upon us,—

Falstaff. And unbound the rest, and then come in the other.

P. Henry. What, fought ye with them all?

Falstaff. All! I know not what ye call all; but if I fought not with fifty of them I am a bunch of radish: if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature.

Poins. Pray God you have not murdered some of them.

Falstaff. Nay, that's past praying for: for I have peppered two of them: two, I am sure, I have paid: two rogues in buckram suits. I tell thee what, Hal,—if I tell thee a lie, spit in my face, call me horse. Thou knowest my old ward;—here I lay, and thus I bore my point. Four rogues in buckram let drive at me,—

P. Henry. What, four? thou said'st but two, even now.

Falstaff. Four, Hal; I told thee four.

Poins. Ay, ay, he said four.

Falstaff. These four came all a-front, and mainly thrust at me. I made me no more ado, but took all their seven points in my target, thus.

P. Henry. Seven? why there were but four, even now.

Falstaff. In buckram.

Poins. Ay, four, in buckram suits.

Falstaff. Seven, by these hilts, or I am a villain else.

P. Henry. Prythee, let him alone; we shall have more anon.

Falstaff. Dost thou hear me, Hal?

P. Henry. Ay, and mark thee too, Jack.

Falstaff. Do so, for it is worth the listening to. These nine in buckram, that I told thee of,—

P. Henry. So, two more already.

Falstaff. Their points being broken,—

Poins. Down fell their hose.

Falstaff. Began to give me ground: but I followed me close, came in foot and hand; and with a thought seven of the eleven I paid.

P. Henry. O monstrous! eleven buckram men grown out of two.

Falstaff. But, as the devil would have it, three misbegotten knaves in Kendal Green came at my back, and let drive at me;—for it was so dark, Hal, that thou could'st not see thy hand.

P. Henry. These lies are like the father that begets them; gross as a mountain, open, palpable.

Falstaff. What, art thou mad? art thou mad? is not the truth the truth?

P. Henry. Why, how could'st thou know these men in Kendal Green, when it was so dark thou could'st not see thy hand? Come, tell us your reason; what sayest thou to this?

Poins. Come, your reason, Jack, your reason.

Falstaff. What, upon compulsion? No; were I at the strappado, or all the racks in the world, I would not tell you on compulsion. Give you a reason on compulsion! if reasons were as plenty as blackberries I would give no man a reason upon compulsion, I.

P. Henry. I'll be no longer guilty of this sin; this sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horseback-breaker, this huge hill of flesh;—

Falstaff. Away, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you stock-fish,—O, for breath to utter what is like thee! —you tailor's yard, you sheath, you bow-case, you vile standing tuck;—

P. Henry. Well, breathe awhile, and then to it again: and when thou hast tired thyself in base comparisons, hear me speak but this.

Poins. Mark, Jack.

P. Henry. We two saw you four set on four; you bound them, and were masters of their wealth.—Mark now, how plain a tale shall put you down. Then did we two set on you four: and, with a word, out-faced you from your prize, and have it; yea, and can show it you here in the house:—and Falstaff, you carried your guts away as nimbly, with as quick dexterity, and roared for mercy, and still ran and roared, as ever I heard bull-calf. What a slave art thou to hack thy sword as thou hast done; and then say, it was in fight! What trick, what device, what starting-hole, canst thou now find out, to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?

Poins. Come, let's hear, Jack: What trick hast thou now?

Falstaff. By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye. Why, hear ye, my masters: was it for me to kill the heir apparent? Should I turn upon the true prince? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules: but beware instinct; the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter; I was a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself, and thee, during my life; I, for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince. But, by the Lord, lads, I am glad you have the money.—Hostess, clap to the doors; watch to-night, pray to-morrow.—Gallants, lads, boys, hearts of gold, all the titles of good fellowship come to you! What, shall we be merry? shall we have a play extempore?

P. Henry. Content;—and the argument shall be, thy running away.

Falstaff. Ah! no more of that, Hal, an thou lovest me.

In the last scene of the same play, he, Falstaff, is again

introduced on a different field of action at the battle of Shrewsbury, but still preserving the same character of willingness to avoid danger and willingness to obtain credit as a forward encounterer of it. Yet when the battle is on the point of commencing, he cannot altogether stifle his alarms. He 'would it were bed-time and all well.' The prince reminds him that he 'owes God a death,' and this gives occasion for a soliloquy on honour, which I quote the more because we shall hereafter have an opportunity of comparing with it another description of honour drawn by the wittiest of our modern dramatists.

(Act v. Sc. i.)

Falstaff. 'Tis not due yet; I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? how then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word, honour? What is that honour? Air. A trim reckoning!—Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it:—therefore, I'll none of it:—Honour is a mere scutcheon, and so ends my catechism.

But it would not be fair to Shakespeare's higher attributes that the last impression of him be conveyed to your minds by Falstaff's buffooneries. We have seen Richard fall with despairing weakness. We will close our extracts with the contemplation of the dignified resignation of a greater man.

(Henry VIII. Act iii. Sc. ii.)

Wolsey. Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear
In all my miseries; but thou hast forced me
Out of thy honest truth to play the woman.
Let's dry our eyes: and thus far hear me, Cromwell;
And,—when I am forgotten, as I shall be;
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me more must be heard of,—say, I taught thee,
Say, Wolsey,—that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour;—

Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.
Mark but my fall, and that that ruined me.
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition;
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't?
Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee:
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues. Be just and fear not:
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr. 'Serve the king;
And,—Prythee, lead me in:
There take an inventory of all I have,
To the last penny; 'tis the king's: my robe,
And my integrity to heaven, is all
I dare now call my own. O Cromwell, Cromwell,
Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

In this beautiful passage we shall not be doing full justice to Shakespeare if we omit to notice not merely the beauty of the sentiments, wearing nothing but devotion, patriotism and sincerity, here put in Wolsey's mouth, but their consistency with his real feelings of repentance, prompted, it may be, by the change in his fortunes. But that that penitence was real is proved by the fact that the last lines in his speech are but a poetical rendering of his real words. 'If I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs, howbeit this is my just reward for my worldly diligence and pains to do him service, not regarding my godly duty.' [1] An almost similar incident is related of the great Colbert:—'When he was on his death-bed Louis wrote him a letter, but its contents are not known. Dreading that it might contain fresh reproaches, the heart-sick old man refused to open it, exclaiming to his attendants, in language which he might almost seem to have borrowed from our own Wolsey, 'If I had but served my God as faithfully as I

[1] Sharon Turner, Modern History of England, ii. 305, quoting Cave.

have served this man, I might long since have worked out my salvation, but now what awaits me?'[1]

There is a remarkable resemblance, too, to the sentiment here expressed, in Sādi's 'Gulistan,' translated by Ross, p. 171, Apologue 29.—'One of the king's ministers went to Zūannūn (Jonah), the Egyptian, and asked his blessing, saying, "Day and night I am occupied in the service of my prince, hoping for his favour and dreading his displeasure." Zūannūn wept and answered, "Had I feared the Most High God as you have feared the king, I should have been among the number of the elect. Were there not the hope of reward and punishment hereafter, the foot of the dawēsh had stept into the celestial sphere. Had the vizier stood in the same awe of God that he did of the king, he might have been an angel of heaven."'

[1] History of France under the Bourbons, ii. 290.

CHAPTER III.

BEN JONSON.

A.D. 1575–1637.

THE genius of Shakspeare throws all the other dramatists of his own and the succeeding age so completely into the shade, that, on the principle which I laid down as that which should guide us in these lectures, of speaking of no authors but those of absolutely first-rate excellence, I might perhaps be justified in passing them over altogether; and shall only speak of one of those who followed in what may in some sense be called the same school of the drama. I shall pass over Massinger, though he has left us one excellent acting-play, the 'New Way to Pay Old Debts;' Beaumont and Fletcher, who, with very different tastes, and talents of a very dissimilar caste, entered into a strange sort of partnership to write plays together, though there is probably no sort of composition which so imperatively requires the impress of a single mind as a drama; Dryden, who has left us such a number of specimens both in tragedy and comedy that they might have been supposed sufficient to occupy all his time; but whose genius was so wholly unsuited to the theatre, that even his great name has not been able to make a single play popular, either on the stage or in the closet, though, as might be expected, several are adorned with passages of great energy, spirit, and poetic beauty. And the only two of whom I propose to speak are Jonson, Ben Jonson as he is universally called, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare himself, and who was looked on by the great poet so much as a friend, that he performed a principal part in at least two of his plays; and Otway, who wrote in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and who, though dying at an early age, had already achieved a reputation beyond that of any contemporary tragedian, and

who has even been extolled by modern critics of the highest eminence as rivalling Shakespeare himself in some points,[1] though I confess that that praise appears to me to be greatly exaggerated. Of Jonson's personal history we have not been left in the ignorance which we are forced to confess when speaking of Shakespeare: on the contrary, the chief events of his life have been handed down to us with a fulness of detail which goes back even into his early youth. He was originally of a Scotch family, but his grandfather had crossed the border, and had obtained a post under the English government at Carlisle. His father, with the desire which the Johnson of the last century considered the most natural feeling for every Scotchman, to withdraw still further from Scotland, removed to the south, took orders, and settled in Westminster; and, at the great school just founded in that city by Elizabeth, who, with all her faults, was a steady encourager of learning and a generally judicious patroness of men of learning and genius, the young Jonson was placed, and there acquired that classical learning of which he was very proud, and of which in more than one of his works he makes an unseasonable parade. But, his father having died in his infancy, or, according to some accounts, before he was born, his mother after a time married a builder, who caring little for learning, and seeing that his stepson was a stout and strong-limbed boy, took him, by a destiny the exact opposite to that of Demosthenes,[2] from school, and employed him in his own trade. He was not well pleased with the change; he had acquired not only a tincture of, but a real fondness for classical studies; and it is said that he constantly carried books in his pocket; and the future favourite of the court, with his hod on his shoulder, would halt on the ladder's steps, and beguile his time by stopping to refresh his memory with some of the masterpieces of ancient literature. To his stepfather such

[1] 'The talents of Otway in his scenes of passionate affection, rival at least, and sometimes excel, those of Shakespeare.'—Scott's Essay on the Drama.

[2] Quem pater ardentis massæ fuligine lippus
A carbone, et forcipibus, gladiosque parante
Incude, et luteo Vulcano ad rhetora misit.—Juv. x. 130.

a diversion seemed a sad waste of time; but it led to that other change in his mode of life to which we owe our acquaintance with him. As his story is commonly told, a lawyer at Lincoln's Inn, where some new buildings were in progress, saw the youth resting on the scaffolding, and heard him recite or read a passage of Homer with a zest which showed that he felt its beauties. He enquired his history, and procured him aid sufficient to enable him to resume his more congenial studies to greater advantage. Ben was sent to Cambridge, and there he studied for a while with great assiduity, though his stay there is understood not to have been uninterrupted. Why he quitted the university we do not know, but there seems no doubt that, shortly after his first admission to it, he left it, and enlisted in an expedition which was sent to the Continent, probably that which in the year 1591 the Queen sent under the command of Essex to the aid of Henry IV., then engaged in a contest which his inferiority to the great Duke of Parma rendered terribly unequal. The English troops, however, distinguished themselves by their steadiness and good conduct; and Jonson himself, though only a youth of seventeen, is said to have won the favourable notice of his officers. But apparently military glory was as little to his taste as the more useful labours of the builder. At all events his period of service was of short duration: he returned to Cambridge, only however to quit it again after a brief probation, probably from want of pecuniary means; as, at the beginning of 1594, when he was hardly twenty years of age, we find him married and supporting, or endeavouring to support himself and his wife by engaging in a theatrical company which had a small theatre in the north of London. His acting was bad: but it led him to fortune by procuring him the acquaintance of Shakespeare, who conceived his talents to be better fitted to produce plays of his own than to represent those of others; and encouraged him to write for the stage, giving him valuable hints and even assistance. His occupation in this way was interrupted, and in a less creditable way than his Cambridge studies had been; he was of a jealous, imperious and quarrelsome temper, and, having killed a brother actor in a

brawl, he was committed to prison, though he must have been acquitted of legal guilt, or at all events have escaped with but a short confinement, since, as early as 1598, he produced his first play, which in some respects is his best, 'Every Man in his Humour.' One scene in it, where the jealous merchant Kitely is called off to important business (Act iii. Sc. iii.), when he believes his wife is expecting visitors of whom he is suspicious, and when he is anxious to station his servant as a spy over her, and yet ashamed and afraid to discover his jealousy to him, is extolled by Schlegel as such a masterpiece that if 'he had always written so we must have been obliged to rank him among the first of comic writers.' But he does not always write so. On the contrary he seems to have conceived that his genius lay more in tragic delineation of character; perhaps because such gave him greater opportunities of displaying his classical scholarship, of which he was immoderately proud; but in which in truth he has exhibited rather his want of taste than his dramatic genius. His scholarship in his own eyes gave him a superiority over Shakespeare, whom, in spite of his great obligations to him, he took great delight in decrying; but, though Shakespeare's classical dramas are far from being his best, the worst of them is greatly superior to the best of Jonson's. Shakespeare had the art of being true to history, and yet satisfying the demands of poetry. In Jonson's hands the subject continues history without becoming poetry. 'Catiline' and 'Sejanus' are solid dramatic studies after Sallust and Cicero, but not dramas. They are a history in dialogue. And in the last scenes of 'Catiline' the poet has actually translated whole passages out of the speeches as given by Sallust, and in Cicero's works, without attempting to raise them to any poetical elevation. It is no wonder that pieces written on such a plan and in such a spirit failed to attain the popularity of Shakespeare. But Jonson was not inclined to accept the verdict of the public. He was conscious of considerable abilities, of a solid understanding, and of great industry and earnestness. And when he found that the spectators would not accept these qualities in lieu of, or as equivalent to skill in the contrivance of plots, acuteness in

the portrayal of character, judgment in the preservation of it, and that subtle art easier felt than described, which in Shakespeare gives not only life to the personages of the play, but reality to the most improbable incidents, he blamed everyone but himself. He blamed his rivals or contemporaries whose works were preferred to his own, and scattered over his prologues and epilogues, and even over his later plays, comments in disparagement of their most admired compositions, with sarcastic allusions to those qualities to which he conceived them to owe their popularity; at times even venting his displeasure on the actors and spectators themselves, saying for instance in one case, that one of his plays had been 'not *acted*, but most negligently played by some, the king's servants, and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others, the king's subjects.'

I have said that he began with comedy; after two attempts at tragedy he returned to comedy again; but he had no skill in the management of his plots; and he was equally deficient in that light and easy raillery which plays harmlessly round its scenes, seeming to be the natural effusion of a gay and happy temperament. Jonson, on the contrary, did everything by rule; and even when, as in one or two instances he did, he had contrived a happy or ingenious plot, he devoted so much space to what he conceived to be the full delineation of his characters, that he lost sight of the action necessary to keep alive the attention of the spectators. Schlegel compares him in this respect to those over-accurate portrait painters who, to insure a likeness, think they must copy every carbuncle or freckle; but though he fails to present us with characters which fix themselves in the memory, he has succeeded to a great degree in seizing the manners of his age and nation; and it is for these qualities that his plays are now chiefly valuable. In the Alchemist, for instance, he shows us, though with too much profuseness of detail, the almost universality of the belief in alchemy. In 'Every Man in his Humour' (Act i. Scene i.) he satirises the extreme devotion to field sports, which many considered then, as indeed many do now, the sole occupation worthy of a gentleman. But there is no lightness in the dialogue; and I cannot better show the

difference between his and Shakespeare's wit than by subjoining one of the most celebrated scenes in which Bobadil gives the rein to his boastful spirit, and which every reader's recollection will lead him instinctively to compare with Falstaff's indulgence of the same propensity.

His plays, as I have said, were not very successful. One of them, or rather one in which he had but a third share with two other writers, Chapman and Marston, had nearly proved disastrous to him; since some reflections on the Scotch, which appeared in the preface, so offended King James, that the whole trio were thrown into prison and threatened with the pillory. But Jonson's peace with the vain and irritable monarch was soon made by some of the courtiers, whose favour he secured by his skill and rapidity in composing the semi-dramatic entertainments then known as Masques, which even Milton did not think beneath his Muse. And before the end of the reign he received the appointment of poet laureat, the emolument of which was afterwards augmented by King Charles. He received also a pension from the city of London; and thus in his latter years had the means of living in comfort, and even in luxury. He died in 1637 at the age of sixty-one, and was buried in Westminster, which, as a schoolboy, he had attended, and where a stone with the quaint inscription 'O rare Ben Jonson' still marks his resting-place.

I have said that he was of a jealous and quarrelsome temper, and this can hardly be better illustrated than by a circumstance mentioned by no less a person than the great Lord Clarendon, who records that he was intimate with him in his youth, but that Jonson discarded him out of pique on finding that he applied himself to the study of his profession, 'which he believed ought never to be preferred before his company.' Clarendon bestows high praise upon him, but it is such as belongs rather to a critic than to a poet, saying with great judgment and truth that 'his natural advantages were judgment to govern the fancy rather than excess of fancy. And that as he did exceedingly exalt the English language in eloquence, propriety, and masculine expressions, so he was the judge of, and fittest to prescribe rules to poetry and poets of any man

who had lived with or before him, or since, if Mr. Cowley had not made a flight beyond all men, with that modesty yet as to ascribe much of this example and learning to Ben Jonson.'

Our first extract is that to which I have already alluded, in which Captain Bobadil (whose name has become almost proverbial as synonymous with a braggart) boasts of his prowess to Master Matthew, out of whose combined timorousness and simplicity he contrives to extract a livelihood.

(Every Man in his Humour, Act iv. Sc. vii.)

Kno'well. Captain, did you ever prove yourself upon any of our masters of defence here?

Matthew. O good sir! Yes, I hope he has.

Bobadil. I will tell you, sir. Upon my first coming to the city, after my long travel, for knowledge (in that mystery only) there came three or four of 'em to me, at a gentleman's house, where it was my chance to be resident at that time, to intreat my presence at their schools; and withal so much importuned me, that (I protest to you as I am a gentleman) I was asham'd of their rude demeanour out of all measure: well, I told 'em that to come to a public school, they should pardon me, it was opposite (in diameter) to my humour; but, if so be they would give their attendance at my lodging, I protested to do them what right or favour I could, as I was a gentleman, and so forth.

Kno'well. So, sir, then you tried their skill?

Bobadil. Alas, soon tried! You shall hear, sir. Within two or three days after they came; and, by honesty, fair sir, believe me, I grac'd them exceedingly, shew'd them some two or three tricks of prevention, have purchas'd 'em since a credit to admiration! They cannot deny this: and yet now they hate me, and why? Because I am excellent, and for no other vile reason on the earth.

Kno'well. This is strange and barbarous! as ever I heard.

Bobadil. Nay, for a more instance of their preposterous natures; but note, sir. They have assaulted me some three, four, five, six of them together, as I have walked alone in divers skirts i' th' town, as Tothill, Whitechapel, Shoreditch, which were then my quarters; and since, upon the exchange, at my lodging, and at my ordinary; where I have driven them afore me the whole length of a street, in the open view of all our gallants, pitying to hurt them, believe me. Yet all this lenity will not o'ercome their spleen; they will be doing with the pismire, raising a hill a man may spurn abroad with his foot at pleasure. By myself I could have

slain them all, but I delight not in murder. I am loth to bear any other than this bastinado for 'em: yet I hold it good polity not to go disarm'd, for though I be skilful, I may be oppress'd with multitudes.

Kno'well. I believe me, may you, sir: and, in my conceit, our whole nation should sustain the loss by it, if it were so.

Bobadil. Alas, no: what's a peculiar man to a nation? not seen.

Kno'well. O, but your skill, sir.

Bobadil. Indeed, that might be some loss; but who respects it? I will tell you, sir, by the way of private, and under seal; I am a gentleman, and live here obscure, and to myself; but were I known to her majesty and the lords (observe me), I would undertake, upon this poor head and life, for the public benefit of the state, not only to spare the entire lives of her subjects in general; but to save the one half, nay, three parts of her yearly charge in holding war, and against what enemy soever. And how would I do it, think you?

Kno'well. Nay, I know not, nor can I conceive.

Bobadil. Why thus, sir. I would select nineteen more to myself throughout the land; gentlemen they should be of good spirit, strong and able constitution; I would choose them by an instinct, a character that I have; and I would teach these nineteen the special rules: as your punto, your reverso, your stoccato, your imbroccato, your passado, your montanto, till they could all play very near, or altogether as well as myself. This done, say the enemy were forty thousand strong, we twenty would come into the field the tenth of March or thereabouts; and we would challenge twenty of the enemy; they could not in their honour refuse us; well, we would kill them; challenge twenty more, kill them; twenty more, kill them; twenty more, kill them too; and thus would we kill every man his twenty a day, that's twenty score, that's two hundred; two hundred a day, five days a thousand; forty thousand; forty times five, five times forty; two hundred days kills them all up by computation. And this will I venture my poor gentleman-like carcass to perform, provided there be no treason practised upon us, by fair and discreet manhood; that is, civilly by the sword.

Our second extract is from one of his classical plays; since a comparison of this scene, in which he has done little more than translate the speeches which are recorded by Sallust, or were actually delivered by Cicero, with Shakespeare's tragedies on classical subjects, and especially with Anthony's noble funeral oration over Cæsar, will show in a very re-

markable and sufficient manner the vast difference between the genius of the two men.

(Catiline's Conspiracy, Act v. Sc. vi.)

Cicero. Your sentence, Caius Cæsar.
Cæsar. Conscript fathers,
In great affairs, and doubtful, it behoves
Men that are asked their sentence, to be free
From either hate or love, anger or pity;
For where the least of these do hinder, there
The mind not easily discerns the truth.
I speak this to you in the name of Rome
For whom you stand; and to the present cause;
That this foul fact of Lentulus, and the rest,
Weigh not more with you than your dignity;
And you be more indulgent to your passion,
Than to your honour. If there could be found
A pain or punishment equal to their crimes,
I would devise and help: but if the greatness
Of what they've done exceed all man's invention,
I think it fit to stay where our laws do.
Poor petty states may alter, upon humour,
Where, if they offend with anger, few do know it,
Because they are obscure; their fame and fortune
Is equal and the same. But they that are
Head of the world, and live in that seen height,
All mankind knows their actions. So we see
The greater fortune hath the lesser license.
They must not favour, hate, and least be angry;
For what with others is call'd anger, there
Is cruelty and pride. I know Syllanus,
Who spoke before me, a just, valiant man,
A lover of the state, and one that would not,
In such a business, use or grace or hatred;
I know too, well, his manners and his modesty;
Nor do I think his sentence cruel (for
'Gainst such delinquents what can be too bloody?)
But that it is abhorring from our state,
Since to a citizen of Rome offending,
Our laws give exile, and not death. Why then
Decrees he that? 'Twere vain to think, for fear;
When by the diligence of so worthy a consul,
All is made safe and certain. Is't for punishment?
Why death's the end of evils, and a rest

Rather than torment: it dissolves all griefs;
And beyond that, is neither care nor joy.
You hear, my sentence would not have 'em die.
How then? Set free, and increase Catiline's army?
So will they, being but banish'd. No, grave fathers,
I judge 'em first to have their states confiscate;
Then that their persons remain prisoners
In the free towns, far off from Rome, and sever'd;
Where they might neither have relation,
Hereafter, to the senate, or the people.
Or, if they had, those towns then to be mulcted,
As enemies to the state, that had their guard.
Senate. 'Tis good, and honourable, Cæsar hath utter'd.
Cicero. Fathers, I see your faces and your eyes
All bent on me, to note, of these two censures
Which I incline to. Either of them are grave,
And answering the dignity of the speakers,
The greatness of th' affair, and both severe.
One urgeth death: and he may well remember
This state hath punish'd wicked citizens so:
The other, bonds, and those perpetual, which
He thinks found out for the more singular plague.
Decree which you shall please: you have a consul,
Not readier to obey than to defend,
Whatever you shall act for the republick;
And meet with willing shoulders any burden,
Or any fortune, with an even face,
Though it were death: which to a valiant man
Can never happen foul, nor to a consul
Be immature, nor to a wise man wretched.

OTWAY.

A.D. 1651–1685.

A SATIRIST has called a coat out at elbows the livery of the Muses, and of all the poets of whom we shall have to speak there is no one who experienced the misery and degradation of want more than Thomas Otway, the only dramatist of the Restoration period from whose works it is possible to produce extracts. That in so licentious an age he should have avoided its besetting and foulest sin is very creditable to him, and he has need that what can be said in

his favour should not be suppressed, for his distresses seem to have been attributable to nothing but his own misconduct. He was born in 1651, and being the son of a Sussex clergyman, received a good education at Winchester and Oxford, but he left the university without taking a degree; and when he was twenty-one he appeared in one of the London theatres as an actor. In that profession he was unequal to his competitors for fame: his talents in that respect, like those of Shakespeare, were more suited to dramatic composition than to the representation of the writings of others; but he acquired from his engagement an insight into the requirements of stage effect which he speedily began to turn to good account, and very soon afterwards he came out as an author of tragedies, choosing first a classical subject, 'Alcibiades;' taking for his next theme the tragical fate of Don Carlos, a transaction still shrouded in some degree of mystery, and being encouraged by the success of these two pieces to an imitation of the 'Berenice' of Racine, the play of the great French dramatist which more perhaps than any other displays a genius akin to his own. Adopting the fashion of the day, he wrote them in rhyme, and this no doubt contributed to their success, which was very decided, though they are pieces of very moderate merit, which have long been judged unworthy of preservation. The money they produced him his extravagance soon dissipated; but they procured him a friend and patron, Lord Plymouth, who introduced him to a less precarious profession by obtaining for him a commission in the army. But in this honourable position his conduct became worse than ever. He was cashiered for misbehaviour, and returned to his old employment of writing for the stage, following now a more natural model than the rhyming French dramatists, and adopting the blank verse of Shakespeare and his contemporaries; and in one respect he has his reward. It may be doubted whether plays which he now produced were more popular in his own day than 'Don Carlos' or 'Titus' and 'Berenice' had been; but posterity has unanimously assigned 'The Orphan' and 'Venice Preserved' a high place among dramatic compositions, attributing to the author in his pathetic passages a

power only inferior to that of Shakespeare himself. Walter Scott has gone even further, saying, that 'the talents of Otway, in his scenes of passionate affection, rival at least, and sometimes excel those of Shakespeare. More tears have been shed probably for the sorrows of Belvidera and Monimia than for those of Juliet and Desdemona.' Most readers will deem this exaggerated praise; but there can be no question that the scenes between Jaffier and Belvidera have high merit. They not only breathe the purest sentiments of tenderness, but are strictly in keeping with the characters of the speakers, a point of which the poet was at times so careless that in a tragedy which he wrote about the same time, and of which the hero was the great Roman conqueror of the Cimbri, he actually borrowed a number of scenes from Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet,' with nothing but a few verbal alterations, and put the impassioned speeches of the lover of Verona into the mouth of the least sentimental soldier who ever led his procession in triumph to the Capitol. Otway's end was peculiarly miserable; though he received considerable sums from the managers for the performance of his plays, they were always insufficient to support his extravagant profligacy. Within three years of the production of 'Venice Preserved' he was actually starving; and it is said that his death was produced by the charity of one who, pitying his miserable condition, gave him a piece of bread, which he swallowed with such ravenous eagerness that it choked him. The story rests, perhaps, on somewhat doubtful authority; but it is certain that he died in the greatest distress in 1685, when he was barely thirty-four years old.

The subject of 'Venice Preserved' resembles partly that of 'Othello,' partly that of 'Marino Faliero.' Jaffier, a citizen of Venice, had won the heart of Belvidera, daughter and heiress of the Senator Priuli, by saving her from drowning. She had become his wife, and the mother of a son; but Priuli had never forgiven her; he curses her husband for having stolen her from him 'like a thief at dead of night,' and announces his determination to leave them both to beggary. While Jaffier is brooding angrily over his denunciations, he meets Pierre, who is at the head of a con-

spiracy to overthrow the oligarchy which has long tyrannised over the city, and who tells him that Priuli has just signed a decree to seize all his property, which the officers of the law are at that moment executing. Maddened at the intelligence, Jaffier agrees to join the conspiracy, but reveals it to Belvidera, who, to save her father, persuades him to abandon it; he yields to her entreaties, betrays the conspiracy to the Doge, on promise of pardon to the conspirators, of whom he gives a list. But the Senate violates the promise, and condemns them all to death; and on the scaffold, Jaffier, to save Pierre from the ignominy of a public execution, stabs him to the heart, kills himself with a second blow, and Belvidere dies of a broken heart.

(Venice Preserved, Act i. Sc. i.)

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belvi. My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightful joys.
Oh, smile! as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul!
Jaffier. As when our loves
Were in their spring! has, then, my fortune chang'd thee?
Art thou not, Belvidera, still the same——
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour?
Where ease my loaded heart? Oh, where complain?
Belvi. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth?
I joy more in thee (*embracing him*)
Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travail past.
Jaffier. Can there in woman be such glorious faith?
Sure, all ill stories of thy sex are false!
Oh, woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you!
Angels are painted fair, to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of heav'n;
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love!
Belvi. If love be treasure, we'll be wond'rous rich;

I have so much, my heart will surely break with't;
Oh! lead me to some desert, wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
To the high heavens, and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught.
Jaffier. Oh, Belvidera! doubly I'm a beggar;
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want! worldly want! that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chases me in view.
Canst thou bear cold and hunger? Can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?
When banished by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
(In some far climate where our names are strangers)
For charitable succour, wilt thou then,
When, in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads,
Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love?
Belvi. Oh! I will love thee, ev'n in madness, love thee!
Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
Should 'suage itself, and be let loose to thine.
Tho' the bare earth shall be our resting-place,
Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head;
And as thou sighing liest, and swell'd with sorrow,
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;
Then breathe a prayer, and watch thee till the morning.
Jaffier. Hear this, you heav'ns, and wonder how you made her!
Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world;
Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
Tranquillity and happiness like mine;
Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall,
And rise again, to lift you in your pride;
They wait but for a storm, and then devour you.
I, in my private bark, already wreck'd,
Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
That had, by chance, pack'd up his choicest treasure,
In one dear casket, and sav'd only that;

Since I must wander farther on the shore,
Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more. [*Exeunt.*

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belvi. Whither shall I fly?
Where hide me and my miseries together?
Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted?
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation!
Not daring to look up to that dear face,
Which us'd to smile, ev'n on my faults, but down,
Bending these miserable eyes to earth,
Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.
Jaffier. Mercy! kind heaven has surely endless stores
Hoarded for thee, of blessings yet untasted:
Let wretches loaded hard with guilt as I am,
Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the burthen,
Creep with a remnant of that strength they've left,
Before the footstool of that heav'n they've injur'd.
O, Belvidera! I'm the wretched'st creature
E'er crawl'd on earth! now, if thou'st virtue, help me;
Take me
Into thy arms, and speak the words of peace
To my divided soul, that wars within me,
And raises every sense to my confusion.
Belvi. Alas! I know thy sorrows are most mighty.
I know thou'st cause to mourn; to mourn, my Jaffier,
With endless cries, and never-ceasing wailings;
Thou'st lost——
Jaffier. Oh, I have lost what can't be counted;
My friend, too, Belvidera—that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my heart rejoic'd in,
Has us'd me like a slave—shamefully us'd me:
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.
Belvi. What has he done?
Jaffier. Thoud'st hate me, should I tell thee.
O, my dear angel! in that friend I've lost
All my soul's peace; for every thought of him
Strikes my sense hard, and deads it in my brains!
Belvi. Speak!
Jaffier. Before we parted—wouldst thou believe it?—
Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his suff'rings,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and sued for mercy,

Forgetting all our friendship,
With a reproachful hand he dash'd a blow:
He struck me, Belvidera! by heav'n, he struck me!
Buffetted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a coward? am I a villian? tell me?
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.
Damnation! coward!

Belvi. Oh! forgive him, Jaffier:
And, if his suff'rings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaffier. Ah!

Belvi. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death,
What will thy heart do then? Oh! sure 'twill stream,
Like my eyes now.

Jaffier. What means that dreadful story?
Death and to-morrow?

Belvi. The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed it,
They say, according to our friend's request,
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage?
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited;
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession—
Warrants are pass'd for public death to-morrow.

Jaffier. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard! unpleaded! (*Gazing wildly at her*)

Belvi. Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing
To force confession from their dying pangs,
Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!
How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd!
What means my love?

Jaffier. Leave me, I charge thee, leave me! Strong temptations
Wake in my heart.

Belvi. For what?

Jaffier. No more, but leave me.

Belvi. Why?

Jaffier. Oh! by heav'n, I love thee with that fondness,
I would not have thee stay a moment longer
Near these cursed hands.
(*pulls the dagger half out of his bosom, and puts it back again unseen by her*)
There's a lurking serpent
Ready to leap and sting thee to thy heart:
Art thou not terrified?

Belvi. No.
Jaffier. Call to mind
What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought me.
Belvi. Ha!
Jaffier. Where's my friend? my friend, thou smiling mischief!
Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late, for dire revenge
Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans!
Hark, how he groans! his screams are in my ears!
Already! see they've fixed him on the wheel.
And now they tear him—Murder! perjur'd senate!
Murder! Oh! hark thee, traitress, thou'st done this!
Thanks to thy tears, thou false persuading love.
(*feels for his dagger*)
How her eyes speak! oh, thou bewitching creature!
Madness can't hurt thee—come, thou little trembler,
Creep ev'n into my heart, and there lie safe;
'Tis thy own citadel.—Hah! yet stand off,
Heav'n must have justice, and my broken vows
Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——
Belvi. What means the lord
Of me, my life, and love? What's in thy bosom,
Thou grasp'st at so?
(JAFFIER *draws the dagger, and offers to stab her*)
Ah! do not kill me, Jaffier! pity—pity.
(*falls on her knees*)
Jaffier. No, Belvidera! when we parted last,
I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,
To be thy portion, if I e'er proved false.
On such condition was my truth believ'd:
But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.
(*offers to stab her again*)
Belvi. Oh! mercy!
Jaffier. Nay, no struggling.
Belvi. (*leaps on his neck and kisses him*) Now, then, kill me,
While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.
Jaffier. I am, I am a coward—witness't, heav'n,
Witness it, earth, and ev'ry being witness:
'Tis but one blow! yet, by immortal love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.
(*he throws away the dagger and embraces her*)

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee;
And thou wast born for yet unheard-of wonders.
Oh! thou wert either born to save or damn me!
By all the pow'r that's given thee o'er my soul—
By thy resistless tears and conqu'ring smiles—
By thy victorious love that still waits on thee—
Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever.
Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees,
Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him;
Crush him in thy arms, torture him with thy softness:
Nor till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
But conquer him, as thou hast vanquish'd me. [*Exeunt.*

CHAPTER IV.

GOLDSMITH.

1728–1774.

At the same time that Otway was moving the sympathies of the audience by the sorrows of Belvidera, there arose another school of dramatists, whose object seemed to be to set all feeling as well as all propriety at defiance. So far as the especial office of comedy is to represent the scenes of everyday life, they were the most genuine comedians that the country had at that time witnessed, since they certainly professed to portray the manners of their own time with far greater fidelity than had been consistent with either Jonson's plan or Jonson's abilities. And if their plays were a true picture of the state of English society in the latter part of the seventeenth century, it is hard to conceive a greater condemnation of it. The protest which the profligacy of the court of Charles II. seemed intended to utter against the pharisaical strictness of the Puritans who had recently oppressed the land, was not unnaturally re-echoed still more loudly by the dramatists, who had been altogether silenced under the Commonwealth; and it may be feared that those writers were but following the taste of the nation when they set themselves to work to hold up not only religion, but virtue, and even decency to scorn, and to preach licentiousness and vice as the one duty of all men and all women. The most celebrated of the class are four in number: Wycherly, Congreve, Farquhar, and Sir John Vanbrugh; the last of whom combined theatrical talent with another, which seems to have but slight connection with it. He was an architect; the builder of Blenheim and of more than one other of the great baronial palaces of England. A strong family likeness runs through the whole quartet, and I confess that it seems to me that none of

them quite deserve the praise which has been lavished on them. Critics have been in the habit of ascribing to them a peculiar skill in the delineation of character; but, in that branch of their art, they are certainly very deficient in the first requisite of all, variety. The chief personages in every one of their plays are as monotonous as their pursuits, which are limited to two: intrigue and gambling, a pastime imported by Charles from France. Their wit, especially that of the two first, is greatly extolled, some critics having even gone the extravagant length of saying that Congreve has too much wit; a charge afterwards brought against Sheridan. Perhaps a more correct judgment would find fault rather with its quality than with its quantity; and would allege that, abundant as Congreve's wit unquestionably is, it is not of the right kind, but displays an epigrammatic sparkle rather than the true comic vein. It is the wit not of a man naturally witty, but of one who plans and polishes his jokes beforehand with a constant straining after effect, which is so perceptible, that it deprives them of it. Those who look upon a natural liveliness as one of the most essential qualities of a good comedy, may perhaps give the palm to Farquhar. Vanbrugh is decidedly the least attractive of the four; but were they ever so witty or ever so lively, wit and liveliness would still not be the predominant feature of their plays. The one feature which, above all others, forces itself on our notice in every work of the whole school, is the absolute shamelessness of every person portrayed, male or female. Not one of their leading characters is represented with the slightest conception that the grossest vices are things to be concealed; chastity is derided by the ladies as unblushingly as by the gentlemen, and vice is not only rampant but triumphant. So glaring was their iniquity that, in the last years of the century, it provoked a chastisement from a clergyman of great learning as well as courage, and by no means destitute of the power of appreciating true wit, since he was himself endowed with it in no slight degree. In 1698 he published an essay on 'The Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage,' in which he attacked not only Wycherley and Congreve, but Dryden also, whose comedies, very poor as compositions,

were nearly as licentious as those of the others. Dryden, now sinking into the grave, frankly and gracefully owned his error, and avowed his repentance. But Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh resolved to show that the shamelessness with which they invested the characters of their plays belonged to themselves also. They wrote pamphlets in their own defence, but had the mortification to find that the majority of their readers sided with Collier. They scorned, indeed, to amend, and their plays written after the commencement of the controversy are not more decent than their earlier works, but they had no imitators. The dramatists of the next generation, if, on the whole, rather dull, were decorous; nor was it till George III. was on the throne that the stage was enlivened by plays which showed the possibility of uniting the most absolute propriety with the most lively humour and the most brilliant wit. The authors of the most brilliant comedies of that age were two Irishmen, Goldsmith and Sheridan; the first-mentioned of whom is remarkable as having been the first writer in our language who sought and attained the praise of first-rate excellence in more than one line of composition. Dryden, indeed, had written prose, and good prose, but it was ancillary to his poetry, and only criticism on poetry; while his plays were confessedly poor. But the subject of our present consideration was multifarious beyond him or any other man. Johnson's epitaph on him, though dictated by friendship, was no exaggeration. 'Nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit; nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.'[1] And it is no slight testimony to his power as well as to his versatility, qualities which are not often combined, that we shall have to recur to his works in no fewer than three of our divisions, and may, perhaps, have our judgment called in question if we do not also speak of him in relation to a fourth.

Oliver Goldsmith was born in 1728, at Pallas, in the county of Longford, where his father, a younger son of a gentleman of good family, had a curacy. He was a sickly

[1] There was hardly any kind of writing which he did not attempt, and there was not one which he did attempt to which he failed to do honour.

and ungainly child. A severe attack of small-pox, which permanently disfigured his features, impaired his health also, till he gradually outgrew the weakness which it had left behind it; and these combined infirmities made him a butt for the rough schoolboy ill-nature of his playmates, whose inconsiderate wantonness cowed his spirits, so that he was commonly accounted a dunce of more than usual hopelessness. But it was a character which one or two of those who were set over him saw from the first he did not deserve; and, indeed, to those who cared enough about him to remark him carefully, he showed decided indications of latent ability. From his childhood he was fond of rhyming; and, of his quickness, far beyond his years, at repartee, many instances were preserved. From school at Elphin he was removed to Trinity College, Dublin, by which time he had so entirely outgrown the ill-effects of his early bullying, and recovered the gaiety of temper which was natural to him, that he was more distinguished for riot than for learning; though, in at least one noted instance, he bore the discredit of irregularities in which others had really taken the leading share. In 1749 he took his degree. But, if this termination of his university career was, in one sense the end of his troubles, in another it was only the beginning of them; since it rendered it necessary for him at once to decide on a profession, and there was none for which both his friends and himself thought him qualified. Of his perplexities, and generally of the anxieties and difficulties that beset him for some years, we obtain a fair notion from his own writings; not of a direct or autobiographical kind, but through his fondness for drawing on his own experience for incidents to enliven his different works. And thus we learn that his family wished him to take orders; but, when the Bishop of Elphin refused him ordination, he did not take the disappointment greatly to heart, because 'to be obliged to wear a long wig when he liked a short one, or a black coat when he generally dressed in brown,' he thought too great 'a restraint on his liberty.' He would have preferred the bar; but he does not seem ever to have made any serious attempt to become a lawyer, a profession for which his desultory disposition and absent

manner wholly unfitted him. While he was doubting, a friend procured him employment as a private tutor, of which he soon became so weary that he resolved to emigrate in preference to continuing in it, and actually paid his passage to America, but the ship sailed sooner than he expected, leaving him behind; and, as his fare had taken nearly all his money, he was reduced to greater straits than ever. It is characteristic of his impulsive good-nature that though he had but five shillings left to carry him back home, a distance of more than 100 miles, he gave half-a-crown of it to a poor woman who met him on the road with a tale of grievous distress; hoping, indeed, to obtain a further supply from a friend whom he had often obliged in the same way, but who ungratefully turned his distress into ridicule, and gave him no aid beyond the present of an oak stick, which, following, in all likelihood unconsciously, the advice of Bishop Jewel to Hooker, he facetiously called a safe nag to carry him forward on his journey. Goldsmith 'was in some doubt whether he should not in the first instance apply it to his pate,'[1] but his unworthy friend's head was saved by the arrival of another visitor. And when he reached his mother's house at Ballymaton, his family provided him with some more funds, with which he crossed over to Edinburgh to study medicine, a science for which apparently he was as unsuited as for the law, but for which the frequency with which he resumed the idea seems to show that he had a real predilection. But the Scotch metropolis did not at that time deserve the high reputation as a school of medicine which it has since attained, and in May, 1753, he decided on removing to Leyden. And a comical distress which delayed his voyage saved his life. He went by sea to Newcastle, intending from that port to cross over to the continent; but some of his messmates were Scotchmen in the French service, and on his arrival at Newcastle he was arrested with them on the charge of enlisting soldiers for the French king, or perhaps for the Pretender, and was

[1] 'You are going, my boy,' cried I, 'to London on foot, in the manner Hooker, your great ancestor, travelled there before you. Take from me the same horse that was given him by the good Bishop Jewel, this staff. —*Vicar of Wakefield*, chap. 3.

thus prevented from embarking in the ship in which he had intended to sail, and which was wrecked on her passage, every one of the crew being drowned. At the end of a year he got tired of Leyden, and resolved to spend some time in travelling, not being daunted by his poverty, because a Denmark scholar had recently traversed almost the whole of Europe 'on foot, without money, recommendations, or friends; a good voice and a trifling skill in music being the only finances he had to support an undertaking so extensive; so he travelled by day, and at night sang at the doors of peasants' houses to get himself a lodging.'[1] Goldsmith had no voice, but he played the flute with considerable taste and some skill, and his instrument was often put in requisition to pay for the hospitality exercised towards him. Oft

> Would the village praise his wondrous power,
> And dance forgetful of the noontide hour?

But he lived not entirely among the lower classes; sometimes, when in possession of more resources than usual (not impossibly obtained from the gaming-table, to which he was too much addicted), he mixed in higher society; in one of his letters he speaks of having beheld the beauty which graced the Court of Versailles; and he was a visitor of Voltaire, for whose high-breeding, general ability, and more especially of whose wit and conversational powers, he conceived the most enthusiastic admiration. It is a strong testimony to his possession of that quality, for which he has rarely been given credit, shrewd good sense, that his appreciation of the brilliancy of the author of 'Candide' and 'Zaire' did not in the least blind him to the faults of the French character. Very few prose writers, in grave essays, have more graphically or more correctly delineated the frivolous capricious vanity of the nation, or have pointed out how it was the parent of that intellectual demoralisation from which such fearful miseries soon began to flow in a stream which, even down to the present day, seems as rapid and as turbid as at its first outpouring. In 'The

[1] Enquiry into the State of Polite Learning, chap. vi.

Traveller,' which he began at this period, he points how 'praise,' the sole object of a Frenchman's ambition—

> Too dearly loved or warmly sought,
> Enfeebles all internal strength of thought.
> . . . . . .
> The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
> Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause;

while, with an equal acuteness of political speculation, he discerned in the language and acts of the Parliament indications of a disposition to throw off the shackles which had hitherto deprived the people of all freedom; and, in a periodical which he began to publish shortly after his return to England, he ventured to predict the coming struggle, at a time when, with the single exception of Lord Chesterfield, whose letters show that he had conceived the same opinion, probably no statesman in Europe had a suspicion of danger.

From France he proceeded into Italy, and at Padua he is generally believed to have received the degree of Doctor of Medicine, but he did not extend his travels further to the southward, being probably deterred by the signs of a speedy renewal of hostilities between France and England, and in 1756 he returned to England, having apparently exhausted his resources; for the variety of occupations in which during the next few months he engaged, is of itself a proof of the extreme difficulty he found in maintaining himself. In spite of his former dislike of the profession of a tutor, he became an usher in a school, then a chemist's assistant, then he set up on his own account as a physician in Southwark, where he got no patients but such as were too poor to seek more experienced advice, or to pay for his. There are vague stories, not authenticated, but not disproved, of his having even formed a company of strolling players. He complained that there was, in London, a prejudice against his countrymen which was sufficient to keep him unemployed; and on one occasion, in later years, he spoke of himself, probably in allusion to this period of his career, as having 'lived among the beggars in Axe Lane.' His distresses had almost broken even his unconquerable cheerfulness. In a letter to a friend he describes himself as having been at last left without 'friends, recommenda-

tions, money, or impudence;' and declares that 'many in such circumstances would have had recourse to the friar's cord or the suicide's halter.' But with all his follies he had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other. In truth, there was a manliness in Goldsmith's disposition which prevented him for ever despairing. He could hardly be unconscious of the possession of great talents for literature, the only path of life for which his poverty was no disqualification. On the contrary, he conceived that it was a natural guide 'to the gates of the Muses,' the mischief being that it often persisted in favouring poets with its company after their introduction within the temple. However, before the end of the next year, he obtained employment as a regular writer on the 'Monthly Review,' published by a man named Griffiths, who gave him board, lodging, and a regular salary; but who, though perfectly illiterate, not only took upon himself to correct his writings, but allowed his wife the same privilege. Such a connection was not likely to last long, nor did it. Goldsmith broke it off at the end of five months, and was again for a time in great poverty. Once more he resumed the idea of practising medicine, but the College of Surgeons refused to pass him as possessed of knowledge sufficient to qualify him to act as mate of a hospital; and he was thrown back, sorely against his will, on literature as a profession. Scott has called literary work a good stick but a bad crutch; good as an auxiliary, miserable as the sole means of livelihood; and few have had greater reason to adopt this view than Goldsmith, for his principal employment was still for some time only as a writer in reviews and magazine work, which, even at the present day, is very inadequately paid, and for which, in his day, the remuneration was miserably scanty. Nor, if we may take George Primrose's account of his literary talents, intended for a picture of his own, did he himself conceive his abilities calculated for such tasks. George Primrose found that 'the easy simplicity of his style, and the harmony of his periods, were unnoticed by the public;'[1] while the writers of far inferior power were preferred by the booksellers because they wrote with greater rapidity; and reviews, for which the publishers were most

[1] Vicar of Wakefield, chap. xx.

anxious, were especially distasteful to him. Yet the relief which he first sought was almost identical with his grievance, except that he became his own master. A treatise which, in 1759, he had published under the title of 'An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe,' had attracted a good deal of attention, and had made his name known to thoughtful readers by whom his anonymous magazine articles had been unnoticed. And the reputation which it had procured him gave him self-reliance enough to undertake a periodical of his own, on the plan of the 'Spectator,' to which he gave the name of the 'Bee.' But it failed to answer his expectations, and after eight numbers he discontinued it and formed a regular engagement with another publisher of the name of Newbery, to contribute a series of essays, similar to those of the 'Bee,' to a new paper or magazine which was to come out in January 1760. They were called Chinese letters, professing to be written by a Chinese traveller who had taken up his residence in England, and who aimed at giving his friends at home an idea of the manners of the singular people in the West among whom he had settled. The idea was not new; one or two works on the same plan had lately been published in France, and, at the beginning of the century, Swift had contemplated a similar series in the character of an Indian, but afterwards complained that he had mentioned the plan to Steele, who had used it in the 'Spectator,' but had compressed into a single number what he himself had designed to work out into a volume. But Swift's talents, great as they were, were of a less playful cast than Goldsmith's; as a satirist he was more like Juvenal than Horace, and we may well doubt whether he would have been able to set off the lucubrations of his Indian with the felicitous sportiveness that still makes the letters, now better known by the name under which they were subsequently published in a collected form, of 'The Citizen of World,' the most popular work of their class. Johnson, with whom Goldsmith had lately become acquainted, and who, with his 'Rambler' and 'Idler,' was a worker in the same field, praised them highly, declaring that 'no one could pen an essay with such ease and elegance as Gold-

smith.' But ease and elegance were not the highest qualities perceptible in either the 'Letters' or the 'Bee.' If he resembled Horace, as he perhaps does, more than any other English writer, resemble him in the slyness of his humour and the delicacy of his raillery, he is not less distinguished by acuteness of observation, strong good sense, and invariably correct feeling. In more than one instance these essays prove him in advance of his age, as when he raises his voice against the severity of the penal laws, which in his day were not only a disgrace to civilisation but a bar to it; and, again, when he pleads for religious toleration, while some of the sentiments which he from time to time lets drop, have passed into proverbs, or have been quoted as witticisms of men of still greater eminence or rather of more recent notoriety.[1]

No greater proof could perhaps be given of the reputation which these writings procured him among those whose praise was honour, than is supplied by the circumstances that when, at the beginning of 1764, Johnson and his friends established the celebrated Literary Club, he was invited to become one of the original members, with such men as Burke and Reynolds, to whom indeed the merit of first proposing the club is ascribed. And he had hardly joined it when he placed his claim to belong to such a society on a higher foundation by the publication of 'The Traveller,' a poem which, if its comparative brevity compels us to rank it as but a cabinet picture by the side of other works of more pretentious magnitude, yet for truth and purity of feeling, correctness of imagery and delicacy of execution, need fear a comparison with few of its bulkier rivals. As has been already mentioned, he had begun it several years before, and it is chiefly founded on his own experiences: as is 'The Deserted Village,' an equally exquisite, and unluckily equally short poem which he wrote six years afterwards.

[1] For instance, in the third number of the 'Bee' we read that 'the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them,' an apothegm which Voltaire thought worth stealing for his tale of 'Le Chapon et la Poularde,' and which has since been constantly attributed (with a slight verbal alteration) to Talleyrand.

Between the publication of the two he came before the world in two new characters: as a novelist, and as a dramatist. In 1762 or 1763 he one day sent for Johnson in great distress, having been just arrested by his landlady; Johnson, whose roughness of manner never checked the eagerness of his friendship, hastened to obey his summons; and, learning from him that he had a novel ready for the press, took a rapid glance at a few pages of it, carried it to Newbery, and sold it for 60*l.*; but apparently the bookseller did not think much of his bargain, for he kept it by him for some time, till 'The Traveller' had become universally celebrated; then, in 1766 he published it, and it at once surpassed in general popularity not only all his previous works, but, it may almost be said, every work of fiction in the language. It was translated into most European languages; and its attractiveness is but little diminished at the present day. It has been to no purpose that critics have pointed out numerous absurdities in the construction of the plot. He, as it may be said, had already pleaded guilty to them in the preface, saying that there were 'a hundred faults in it, and a hundred things might be said to prove them beauties, but it is needless; a book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity.' And with such unanimity has posterity endorsed the approbation of his contemporaries, that his tale has had the singular good fortune of eliciting the warmest panegyrics from the three greatest writers of this century: Göethe, Byron, and Walter Scott. The incidents are no doubt improbable, if not impossible; but the characters are faultless in their drawing and exquisite in their conception. Goldsmith's uniform purity of feeling is nowhere set off with more exquisite humour. So that, to borrow the words of the greatest of all novelists, 'we bless the memory of an author who continues so well to reconcile us to human nature.'

The next year he tried his talents in a new field, which has led to our placing our sketch of him here among the dramatists, rather than among the poets, essayists, or novelists. It is a remarkable proof of the technical principles on which critics in general exercise their judgment that his

first play was rejected by Garrick, though a personal friend, and that Colman, a manager only second to Garrick, could hardly be prevailed upon to accept the second. Yet 'The Good-natured Man' is distinguished by keenness of observation and great skill in drawing and maintaining character, qualities which he afterwards displayed in a striking manner in his amusing poem of 'Retaliation;' and 'She Stoops to Conquer,' by its wit and originality, on its first appearance charmed both the audience at the theatre, and critics like Johnson in the closet; and to this day, by its constant vivacity and genuine comic power, keeps possession of the stage, one of the incidents in it being actually borrowed afterwards by Sheridan, not for one of his own plays, but for a scene in real life, when, to trick Madame de Genlis into prolonging a visit which she was paying to him, he bribed her post-boy to drive her about a number of cross-lanes in a perfect circuit for several hours; till, finding that she was engaged in a journey which seemed to have no end, and no entertainment save a set of views from the window which seemed rather monotonous, she became so alarmed that she bade the man drive her back to the house where Sheridan, exulting in the success which he had anticipated to his trick, received her with well-feigned surprise.

By 'She Stoops to Conquer' he made several hundred pounds; but he had long before accumulated such a mass of debt that the supply thus furnished could only mitigate, but by no means remove, his distresses; which, as he grew older, pressed upon his spirits more than he had allowed them to do in his youth. His friends recommended him to publish a collected edition of all his works by subscription, which, we can hardly doubt, would have proved profitable; but, while he was revolving this and other plans, he was attacked by a fever, which in the opinion of a friendly physician, Dr. Turton, was aggravated by anxiety of mind, and in the first week of April 1774 he died, leaving behind him a literary reputation the genuine quality of which, as I have intimated in speaking of his different works, is sufficiently proved by its durability.

The first of the following extracts is from 'The Good-natured Man.' Mr. Honeywood is the hero, who devotes

himself with such good nature to the affairs of his friends that he has no time to spare for his own, which in consequence go to ruin. But the most humorous character is Croaker, whose name indicates his character; and of which, according to Boswell, Goldsmith owned that he had taken the idea from the description of Suspirius in the 'Rambler.'

(The Goodnatured Man, Act i.)

Honeywood. Besides, Jarvis, though I could obtain Miss Richland's consent, do you think I could succeed with her guardian, or Mrs. Croaker, his wife; who, though both very fine in their way, are yet a little opposite in their dispositions, you know?

Jarvis. Opposite enough, heaven knows! the very reverse of each other: she all laugh and no joke; he always complaining and never sorrowful; a fretful poor soul, that has a new distress for every hour in the four-and-twenty——

Honeywood. Hush, hush! he's coming up, he'll hear you.

Jarvis. One whose voice is a passing bell.

Honeywood. Well, well; go, do.

Jarvis. A raven that bodes nothing but mischief; a coffin and cross-bones; a bundle of rue; a sprig of deadly nightshade; a—(*Honeywood, stopping his mouth, at last pushes him off.*)

[*Exit* JARVIS.

Honeywood. I must own my old monitor is not entirely wrong. There is something in my friend Croaker's conversation that entirely depresses me. His very mirth is quite an antidote to all gaiety, and his appearance has a stronger effect on my spirits than an undertaker's shop.—Mr. Croaker, this is such a satisfaction——

Enter CROAKER.

Croaker. A pleasant morning to Mr. Honeywood, and many of them. How is this? You look most shockingly to-day, my dear friend. I hope this weather does not affect your spirits. To be sure, if this weather continues—I say nothing. But God send we be all better this day three months!

Honeywood. I heartily concur in the wish, though, I own, not in your apprehensions.

Croaker. May be not. Indeed, what signifies what weather we have in a country going to ruin like ours? Taxes rising and trade falling. Money flying out of the kingdom, and Jesuits swarming into it. I know at this time no less than a hundred and twenty Jesuits between Charing Cross and Temple Bar.

Honeywood. The Jesuits will scarce pervert you or me, I should hope.

Croaker. May be not. Indeed, what signifies whom they pervert in a country that has scarce any religion to lose. I'm only afraid for our wives and daughters.

Honeywood. I have no apprehensions for the ladies, I assure you.

Croaker. May be not. Indeed, what signifies whether they be perverted or no? The women in my time were good for something. I have seen a lady drest from top to toe in her own manufactures formerly. But now-a-days, the devil a thing of their own manufacture's about them, except their faces.

Honeywood. But, however these faults may be practised abroad, you don't find them at home, either with Mrs. Croaker, Olivia, or Miss Richland.

Croaker. The best of them will never be canonised for a saint when she's dead. By the bye, my dear friend, I don't find this match between Miss Richland and my son much relished, either by one side or t'other.

Honeywood. I thought otherwise.

Croaker. Ah, Mr. Honeywood, a little of your fine serious advice to the young lady might go far: I know she has a very exalted opinion of your understanding.

Honeywood. But would not that be usurping an authority that more properly belongs to yourself?

Croaker. My dear friend, you know but little of my authority at home. People think, indeed, because they see me come out in a morning thus, with a pleasant face, and to make my friends merry, that all's well within. But I have cares that would break a heart of stone. My wife has so encroached upon every one of my privileges, that I'm now no more than a mere lodger in my own house.

Honeywood. But a little spirit exerted on your side might perhaps restore your authority.

Croaker. No, though I had the spirit of a lion! I do rouse sometimes. But what then? Always haggling and haggling. A man is tired of getting the better before his wife is tired of losing the victory.

Honeywood. It's a melancholy consideration indeed, that our chief comforts often produce our greatest anxieties, and that an increase of our possessions is but an inlet to new disquietudes.

Croaker. Ah, my dear friend, these were the very words of poor Dick Doleful to me not a week before he made away with himself. Indeed, Mr. Honeywood, I never see you but you put me in mind of poor Dick. Ah, there was merit neglected for you! and so true a friend! We loved each other for thirty years, and yet he never asked me to lend him a single farthing.

Honeywood. Pray what could induce him to commit so rash an action at last?

Croaker. I don't know: some people were malicious enough to say it was keeping company with me, because we used to meet now and then and open our hearts to each other. To be sure I loved to hear him talk, and he loved to hear me talk; poor dear Dick! He used to say that Croaker rhymed to joker, and so we used to laugh. Poor Dick!

In 'She Stoops to Conquer' the fun is of a more lively kind. Mrs. Hardcastle, by a previous marriage, has a son named Tony Lumpkin, whom she has let run wild till he is a mere lout, with a taste for nothing but low company and practical jokes. She has also a wealthy niece, Constance Neville, of whom she is guardian, and whom she wishes to marry to her son. Constance, however, has another lover, with whom she is prepared to elope, and with this view demands from her aunt a casket of jewels which are in Mrs. Hardcastle's keeping. Mrs. Hardcastle seeks to evade giving them; but Tony, who has no fancy for Miss Neville, gets possession of the jewels and gives them to her lover.

(She Stoops to Conquer, Act iii.)

Mrs. Hardcastle. Indeed, Constance, you amaze me. Such a girl as you want jewels? It will be time enough for jewels, my dear, twenty years hence, when your beauty begins to want repairs.

Miss Neville. But what will repair beauty at forty, will certainly improve it at twenty, madam.

Mrs. Hard. Yours, my dear, can admit of none. That natural blush is beyond a thousand ornaments. Besides, child, jewels are quite out at present. Don't you see half the ladies of our acquaintance, my lady Killdaylight, and Mrs. Crump, and the rest of them, carry their jewels to town, and bring nothing but paste and marcasites back.

Miss Neville. But who knows, madam, but somebody that shall be nameless would like me best with all my little finery about me?

Mrs. Hard. Consult your glass, my dear, and then see if with such a pair of eyes you want any better sparklers. What do you think, Tony, my dear? Does your cousin Con. want any jewels in your eyes to set off her beauty?

Tony. That's as hereafter may be.

Miss Neville. My dear aunt, if you knew how it would oblige me.

Mrs. Hard. A parcel of old-fashioned rose and table cut things. They would make you look like the court of King Solomon at a puppet-show. Besides, I believe, I can't readily come at them. They may be missing, for aught I know to the contrary.

Tony. (*Apart to Mrs. Hardcastle.*) Then why don't you tell her so at once, as she's so longing for them? Tell her they're lost. It's the only way to quiet her. Say they're lost, and call me to bear witness.

Mrs. Hard. (*Apart to Tony.*) You know, my dear, I'm only keeping them for you. So if I say they're gone, you'll bear me witness, will you? He! he! he!

Tony. Never fear me. Ecod! I'll say I saw them taken out with my own eyes.

Miss Neville. I desire them but for a day, madam. Just to be permitted to show them as relics, and then they may be locked up again.

Mrs. Hard. To be plain with you, my dear Constance, if I could find them you should have them. They're missing, I assure you; lost for aught I know; but we must have patience wherever they are.

She departs under pretence of searching for them; but finds that they are gone, and during her absence Tony tells his cousin that he has taken them, and has given them for her to Mr. Hastings.

Tony. Don't be a fool. If she gives you the garnets, take what you can get. The jewels are your own already. I have stolen them out of her bureau, and she does not know it. Fly to your spark; he'll tell you more of the matter. Leave me to manage her.

Miss Neville. My dear cousin!

Tony. Vanish. She's here, and has missed them already. (*Exit* Miss NEVILLE.) Zounds how she fidgets and spits about like a catherine wheel.

Enter Mrs. HARDCASTLE.

Mrs. Hard. Confusion! thieves! robbers! We are cheated, plundered, broke open, undone.

Tony. Oh! is that all? Ha! ha! ha! By the laws, I never saw it acted better in all my life. Ecod, I thought you was ruined in earnest, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Hard. Why, boy, I am ruined in earnest; my bureau has been broken open, and all taken away.

Tony. Stick to that; ha! ha! ha! stick to that. I'll bear witness you know; call me to bear witness.

Mrs. Hard. I tell you, Tony, by all that's precious, the jewels are gone, and I shall be ruined for ever.

Tony. Sure I know they are gone, and I'm to say so.

Mrs. Hard. My dearest Tony, but hear me. They're gone, I say.

Tony. By the laws, mamma, you make me for to laugh, ha! ha! I know who took them well enough, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Hard. Was there ever such a blockhead, that can't tell the difference between jest and earnest? I tell you I'm not in jest, booby.

Tony. That's right, that's right; you must be in a bitter passion, and then nobody will suspect either of us. I'll bear witness that they are gone.

Mrs. Hard. Was there ever such a cross-grained brute, that won't hear me? Can you bear witness that you're no better than a fool? Was ever poor woman so beset with fools on one hand, and thieves on the other?

Tony. I can bear witness to that.

Mrs. Hard. Bear witness again, you blockhead you, and I'll turn you out of the room directly. My poor niece, what will become of her! Do you laugh, you unfeeling brute, as if you enjoyed my distress?

Tony. I can bear witness to that.

Mrs. Hard. Do you insult me, monster? I'll teach you to vex your mother, I will.

Tony. I can bear witness to that. (*He runs off, she follows him.*)

SHERIDAN.

A.D. 1751–1816.

SHERIDAN in his own day earned a brilliant fame in two capacities, as one of the greatest orators as well as one of our greatest comic writers; certainly as the most brilliant of all whose wit is not defaced by such indecorum as prevents their being quoted, and should forbid them being read. In Goldsmith there is great humour and occasional wit; in Sheridan there is even keener humour united to wit of the highest quality, and so overflowing in quantity that the only charge that has been brought against 'The School for Scandal' is that he has scattered it too profusely over all his characters; giving even the underlings and servants a conversation as sparkling as their masters. In this perhaps he is not richer than Congreve, though we may think the edge of his wit has a more delicate polish. But

in decorum and propriety he is infinitely his superior. Thackeray's description of Congreve is that in him we have 'a humorous observer to whom the world has no moral at all, and whose ghastly doctrine seems to be that we should eat, drink, and be merry when we can, and go to the deuce (if there be a deuce) when the time comes.' Whether life had a moral for him or not, it is too plain that it had no morality; but the tone of Sheridan's plays is free from such impurity. In one, 'The School for Scandal,' an intrigue indeed is aimed at, but is baffled, and the intended seducer is covered with confusion and disgrace; and, though the hero of the piece, as Charles Surface may be called, is represented as a spendthrift and a libertine, it is as a reformed rake that he is finally rewarded; and if precise virtue might require some more distinct evidence of an amended life, we cannot reasonably expect such a rigorous censorship on the stage; but may fairly own that the defeat of Joseph's machinations, and the promised reformation of his humbled though still light-hearted brother, are as clear a homage to virtue as one could expect from a comic writer whose very business is to present everything in the lightest point of view. In his other plays, in 'The Rivals,' which George III., an ardent play-goer, preferred to 'The School for Scandal,' and in 'The Critic,' no hint of intrigue or libertinism whatever occurs, and Sheridan is fairly entitled to the praise of never transgressing the rules of decorum and propriety.

Unhappily of his speeches, unrivalled as they were in the effect that more than one of them produced on his hearers, we have no sufficient record to enable us to give specimens of his eloquence; but even had it been possible to do so, it would still have seemed more appropriate to give a sketch of his life here, in connection with the stage, because in truth his whole life was a comedy or succession of entanglements, extrications, changes of fortune, both good and bad, troubles, successes, marvellous triumphs ending in degradation and misery, that seemed to belong rather to the theatre than to real life. His very marriage was preceded by a duel that looked like a farce, but threatened at one time to prove a tragedy; and it may

be doubted whether a more ridiculous encounter ever took place than that, as it was described at the time by the Somersetshire county paper. His antagonist was a Mr. Matthews. 'Both their swords breaking upon the first lunge, they threw each other down, and with the broken pieces hacked at each other rolling on the ground, the seconds standing by quiet spectators.'

This was in 1772, when Sheridan was twenty-one years of age. His father had been a distinguished performer on the London stage, and afterwards a schoolmaster. His mother had a high fame as the authoress of a novel, much admired in its day, 'Sidney Biddulph,' and of two at least equally popular plays. Between writing plays and acting them the couple made money enough to afford to send their son, Richard Brinsley, to Harrow, where he probably acquired a good deal of his manly independent spirit and polished manners; but certainly very little knowledge of Greek and Latin, though it may well be that while still a Harrow boy he became imbued with the rudiments of that science in which he was afterwards so unrivalled a proficient, the art of living upon nothing. For, when he was barely fifteen, his father was driven by his embarrassments to retire to France; and, though Richard remained at school three years longer, it may be doubted whether his stay proved expensive to anyone but his tutor. That when he left Harrow he should have tried to support himself by his pen is natural enough. In partnership with another boy, name Halhed, he began by a burlesque farce, to which he gave the name of 'Jupiter,' which, however, no manager would accept. Then they tried a periodical with scarcely better success, as the publisher declined venturing on a second number; and, as neither plan answered, Sheridan at twenty tried a third expedient, and fell in love, desperately in love, with a most amiable and accomplished girl, a Miss Linley of Bath, who, in addition to her charms of mind and person, had the substantial attraction of 3,000*l*. As we have already seen, his wife (for such the lady became before either of them were one-and-twenty) cost him a duel, and very nearly his life. But she seems to have been a woman worth any danger and any suffering, and

though (had she been a less perfect woman than she was, loving and admiring her husband with her whole heart, and only clinging to him the more the more they were surrounded with troubles,) she might well have repented marrying him, it is certain that she never did, and equally unquestionable that he never once wavered in his deep affection towards her. Yet it was a trying life on which the young couple entered. Three thousand pounds was, it is true, a larger sum then than it is now; but still it could even then produce no great income; and it was every farthing, except Sheridan's own earnings, that they ever had in their lives. I have said that Sheridan's whole life was a play, and it would be impossible to exaggerate its strange scenes. No doubt others before and since have lived, that is, have endured life on resources equally, or even more scanty; but Sheridan on his 3,000*l.* lived for nearly forty years in the most fashionable and aristocratic circles in England, associating with peers and princes of the blood, and sought by them rather than seeking them. Nor was this all. He, without money, did the very things that are supposed to require the greatest supply of money, and that ready money. He bought a theatre, he became a member of Parliament; and if, as a manager, he set all the ordinary rules of business at defiance by the most invariable irregularity and unpunctuality, it must be owned, on the other hand, to his high honour, that as a politician he never sacrificed his principles to his necessities. As a rule, he was steadily faithful to his party and its leaders, even when adherence to it was not only adverse to his personal interests, but not wholly in accordance with his private opinion as to what would have been the most political justifiable line of conduct. But in great national emergencies he disengaged himself from party ties, and showed that he considered his first duty of all was to his country. And in spite of some vices and many weaknesses, the evident sincerity of his patriotism has secured him a permanent reputation which his wit and even his eloquence would have been unable to preserve for him. It was not, of course, till after he had obtained a seat in Parliament that it became known how brilliant, how powerful, how occa-

sionally irresistible was his eloquence; but before that day his extraordinary powers of social conversation had opened to him the door to the most fashionable society in London; and afterwards he rapidly achieved so high a reputation that, within two years of his first appearance in the House, when he was little more than thirty years of age, he was allotted a place in the ministry which was appointed with the special object of terminating the American war.

As has been already intimated, his first essays in authorship gave no great promise of future success or excellence. And he took the literary and play-going world by surprise when, in January 1775, when he was only a month or two more than twenty-three years old, he produced 'The Rivals,' which, as soon as a bad actor, who on the first night spoilt one of the most prominent parts, was superseded by one of greater talent, was generally recognised as the best comedy of its class that had ever been acted on a British stage; and which, if it has since in any degree lost that character, owes its comparative humiliation to nothing but the still greater brilliancy of 'The School for Scandal.' Theatrical success of any kind is full of fascinations, and Sheridan yielded to them in more ways than one; following up 'The Rivals' with a lively farce, 'St. Patrick's Day,' which however requires no further mention; with an opera, 'The Duenna,' acted at the end of the same year 1775, and which was deservedly described by Byron as the best opera in the language, being, in truth, of a higher character than other pieces with the same title, in which the music is the only thing of consequence. In 'The Duenna' many of the scenes are of the same high order of comedy as those of 'The Rivals,' while the songs show great poetical talent of the lighter kind. The success of 'The Duenna' surpassed even that which 'The Rivals' had met with; and kindled in him a desire for a more permanent connection with the stage; which resulted in a negotiation for the purchase of half of Drury Lane Theatre from Garrick, who was desirous to retire. Where he procured the money is a mystery which his biographer, Moore, confesses himself wholly unable to solve; but in the spring of 1776 he became the purchaser of two-sevenths of Garrick's share in the theatre;

the other shares being divided between his father-in-law and a couple of other friends; and a year or two later he became the purchaser of the other half, paying or promising to pay for the different shares of which he obtained possession no less a sum than 72,000*l.*

In whatever way he had obtained the money or the credit, the purchase was a speculation on the success of which his whole future prospects depended; and the consciousness of this stimulated him to greater exertions, which at the beginning of the next year brought forth their fruit in 'The School for Scandal,' which for liveliness, knowledge of dramatic effect, and above all for striking wit, surpasses all the efforts of Farquhar or Congreve; and, though there were still some who preferred the humour of 'The Rivals,' seems fairly to deserve the character generally given to it of being the most perfect comedy which has been composed since the time of Shakespeare. The animation is incessant, the wit never flags; and the only fault which hyper-criticism itself has been able to discover is, as I have already mentioned, that the smart sayings and brilliant repartees are distributed to all the characters with almost equal profusion, and that this prodigality of cleverness displays a want of correct judgment; but, though it may perhaps be admitted that some of the speeches are too refined for the speakers, it would be captious indeed to quarrel with a play for no other fault than being too uniformly diverting, and the justice of the general verdict of its pre-eminent excellence is sufficiently confirmed by its remaining undisturbed after the lapse of little less than a century.

Two years later he brought out another play: 'The Critic,' but little inferior to either of his masterpieces. It is usually called a farce in three acts, the two last being a mock tragedy, and the first an introduction rich in all the qualities of a great comedy, though perhaps it may be looked upon as an offence against the strict rules of a modern comedy that one of the chief characters, Sir Fretful Plagiary, was notoriously meant to satirise another dramatic author, Richard Cumberland, a writer of some consideration in his day, but one whose jealous, not to say envious, temper seemed to point him out as a mark for satire con-

ceived in something of the spirit in which Aristophanes brings Euripides on the stage in his 'Frogs.'

But before the appearance of 'The Critic' the author had already yielded to a stronger fascination than that of the stage, in spite of the way in which his fortunes were involved in his theatrical property, the management of which required all his attention. He had become acquainted with Fox, and yielding to the influence which that eminent party leader exerted over nearly all who came within its range, he had become a politician; adopting all his political views, and supporting them by pamphlets and articles in political magazines.. And at the general election of 1780 he was returned for Stafford, and in October of that year took his seat as a member of Parliament.

From this time his theatre obtained but little of his attention; he gave himself up wholly to politics, and very soon established his position as an orator on a height which few speakers in any country have attained, by the part which he took in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. In the present day probably no one will be found to deny that his country has had few greater servants than the Governor-General to whose vigorous and large-minded administration more than to any other single cause is owing the establishment of our Indian empire; and that no one, not even Clive himself, was ever treated with such gross ingratitude; but time had not yet been given to learn the extent of his services to the state. The general wisdom and great practical genius displayed throughout his career, crowned though it had been with general success, was not so manifest, so patent to a cursory observation as the deeds of violence and injustice by which occasionally his administration had been tarnished; the severities of which Cheyte Singh, the Begums, and others, had been the victims, afforded a splendid theme for an orator; and, by the confession of all who heard him, no speaker ever availed himself of the varied opportunities of a great subject with more admirable power and effect than Sheridan.

It was probably owing to the solid fame acquired by his great efforts on this occasion that he became the most

trusted of all the friends and advisers of the Prince of Wales; a prince whose life at this time was one of the most discreditable and ostentatious excess, but who was nevertheless endowed with an acuteness of perception and soundness of intellectual judgment that enabled him to estimate with great accuracy the abilities of his various friends, and their capacity for aiding him in the way in which he needed their help; and, among all his associates, there was none on whose talents in that way he relied so habitually as on Sheridan's. It was Sheridan to whom he applied to appease Mrs. Fitzherbert by doing away with the effect of Fox's denial of his marriage. It was Sheridan who composed for him the most important of his letters to the Queen at the time of the painful divisions in the royal family on the occasion of the King's derangement; and, after his recovery, to the King himself, to justify his own and his brother's conduct. While so honourable was the disinterestedness with which he used his influence over his royal friend, that there was no advice which he gave him more frequently or more earnestly than that, as heir apparent, it was his duty to avoid connecting himself with any party; and that, as one placed by his birth above such divisions, he ought to extend his favour, or at least his courtesy, to all alike. In the division of the Whig party, which was caused by the extravagance with which Fox extolled the conduct of the movers of the French Revolution, and the equal vehemence with which Burke denounced them, Sheridan sided with Fox; and, during all the early years of the revolutionary war, put himself forward as the most unsparing critic of the minister, who looked upon him as by far the most formidable of his adversaries, though more than once, in great emergencies, as at the time of the mutiny of the fleet, he laid aside party feeling and stood manfully forward in support of the Government. And his honourable conduct on these occasions impressed George III. himself so strongly in his favour, that he would willingly have made a distinction between him and the other friends of his son, whom, and especially Fox, he regarded with unmixed disapprobation, if Sheridan himself had not declined accepting any honour which might separate him

from his friends. Yet he was in fact beginning to differ from Fox in opinion on the one subject which engrossed the nation, the war and the character of Buonaparte, whose ambitious violation of the rights of nations he more than once denounced with great vigour; and his pecuniary embarrassments were becoming so heavy that any place or pension would have been of almost vital consequence to him. In the year 1804 the Prince of Wales did confer on him the first office that it had ever been in his power to bestow, that of Receiver of the Duchy of Cornwall, but, by that time, he was so deeply in debt that an increase of income could do no more than stave off the evil day. He was compelled to part with a portion of his theatre, and, though in the ministry which came into office on the death of Pitt he returned to his old and lucrative post of Treasurer of the Navy, his occupation of it was too brief for its emoluments to be of any solid benefit to him. In less than a year and a half the leaders of the ministry, Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, as he said, not only ran their heads against a wall, but built a wall for that express purpose. And with their retirement, Sheridan's political life may almost be said to have ended. One more honour, to which, from the peculiar circumstances under which it was attained, he attached a high value, did indeed fall to his share. He was elected as Fox's successor for Westminster; but it was his last gleam of good fortune, soon to be counterbalanced by a calamity which would have been scarcely sustainable by a man of greater resources, but which to one in his position was overwhelming: in 1809 Drury Lane Theatre, in which he still retained a large interest, was burnt down. He was absolutely ruined. The unabated esteem, indeed, in which the Prince of Wales held his judgment was once more displayed in the discussions which arose on the establishment of the Regency in 1811, when the framing of the Prince's public letters was entrusted to him; and when (though, if the Whigs had returned to office, he was to have had the post which, as an Irishman, he might be supposed especially to have coveted, that of Chief Secretary for Ireland) it is understood to have been principally owing to his advice that the Prince, now Regent,

determined to retain Percival as prime minister. It was his last political act. At the general election in 1812 he lost his seat in Parliament. And 'through the short remainder of his life, it is,' as Moore says, 'a melancholy task to follow him.' Creditors pressed upon him; to meet their demands he was forced gradually to part with the small relics of his property, even with his books and the different memorials of regard and esteem that had been given him by private friends or public bodies. He gave way more and more to habits of intoxication, to which (it was the vice of the age) he had always been too much addicted; and excess of this kind, joined to mortification and anxiety of mind, brought on an illness, of which, in July 1816, he died, at the age of sixty-five.

A short time before his death, Byron, with the generous enthusiasm of youth for great and brilliant talents, declared that whatever Sheridan had done had been, *par excellence*, the best of its kind. He was the wittiest man in a society where there were many wits; he had written the best comedy in the language; he had delivered the best speech ever heard in the country. And the praise is hardly overstrained. The extraordinary power of his eloquence was attested by those who heard it; though, as I shall have occasion to mention hereafter, the speeches themselves do not survive, and their dazzling and persuasive power we must take on trust. But of the brilliancy of his dramatic genius, surpassed by that of Shakespeare alone, we have ample means of judging for ourselves. The 'Rivals' was his earliest play. The 'School for Scandal' is generally reckoned his masterpiece, and extracts from both are subjoined. The heroine of the 'Rivals,' Miss Lydia Languish, is a young heiress, whose head has been so turned by reading romances that she fancies perfect happiness is only to be secured by a love match, which will offend all her relations and involve the forfeiture of her estate; and a Captain Absolute, heir to a testy old baronet, who has fallen in love with her, knowing that, if she were aware how eligible a match he really is, she would reject him, has represented himself to her as a penniless Ensign Beverley. Meanwhile, his father proposes him to Lydia's aunt,

Mrs. Malaprop, as a desirable husband for the niece; and Mrs. Malaprop is highly pleased with the proposal, but is aware of the difficulties which her engagement to the supposed Beverley will cause. However, having explained the case to Sir Anthony, she brings him in to introduce him to the young lady.

(The Rivals, Act i. Sc. ii.)

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP *and* Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lydia. Madam, I thought you once——

Mrs. Mal. You thought, Miss! I don't know any business you have to think at all—thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow, to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.

Lydia. Ah! madam, our memories are independent of our wills; it is not so easy to forget.

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to forget, if a person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle as if he had never existed—and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these vicdent memories don't become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why, sure she won't pretend to remember what she's ordered not! ay, this comes of her reading!

Lydia. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. Mal. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it.—But tell me will you promise to do as you're bid? Will you take a husband of your friend's choosing?

Lydia. Madam, I must tell you plainly that, had I no preference for anyone else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, Miss, with preference and aversion? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know that, as both always wear off, 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a blackamoor, and yet, Miss, you are sensible what a wife I made! and when it pleased heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed! But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

Lydia. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Mrs. Mal. Take yourself to your room. You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

Lydia. Willingly, ma'am; I cannot change for the worse.

But when Sir Anthony proposed marriage to his son without naming the lady, he found him as unwilling as Mrs. Malaprop had found Lydia. A violent quarrel ensued, in which he threatened to disinherit him; but he had hardly quitted him when the Captain found that his intended bride was the very girl of whom he was enamoured. So he resolves to reconcile himself to his father, under pretence of submitting his own wishes to the parental authority.

(Act iii. Sc. i.—The North Parade.)

Enter Captain Absolute.

Abs. 'Tis just as Fag told me indeed. Whimsical enough, faith! My father wants to force me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with! He must not know of my connection with her yet awhile. He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters. However, I'll read my recantation instantly. My conversion is something sudden, indeed, but I can assure him it is very sincere. So, so—here he comes. He looks plaguy gruff.

[*Steps aside.*

Enter Sir Anthony Absolute.

Sir Anth. No—I'll die sooner than forgive him. Die, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our last meeting his impudence had almost put me out of temper. An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters! for putting him at twelve years old into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year besides his pay ever since! But I have done with him; he's anybody's son for me. I never will see him more, never, never, never!

Abs. Now for a penitential face.

Sir Anth. Fellow, get out of my way.

Abs. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir Anth. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Abs. A sincere penitent. I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir Anth. What's that?

Abs. I have been revolving and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness and kindness and condescension to me.

Sir Anth. Well, sir?

Abs. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty and obedience and authority.

Sir Anth. Well, puppy?

Abs. Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is—a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

Sir Anth. Why now you talk sense—absolute sense—I never heard anything more sensible in my life. Confound you! you shall be Jack again.

Abs. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir Anth. Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is. Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare. What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Abs. Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir Anth. Worcestershire! no. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment?

Abs. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay—I think I do recollect something. Languish! Languish! She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl?

Sir Anth. Squints! a red-haired girl! Zounds! No!

Abs. Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same person.

Sir Anth. Jack! Jack! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen.

Abs. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent. If I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

Sir Anth. Nay, but Jack, such eyes! such eyes! so innocently wild; so bashfully irresolute! not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! her cheeks! Jack! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! O Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion; and, if not smiling, more sweetly pouting; more lovely in sullenness!

Abs. That's she, indeed. Well done, old gentleman. [*Aside.*

Sir Anth. Then, Jack, her neck! O Jack! Jack!

Abs. And which is to be mine, sir, the niece, or the aunt?

Sir Anth. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you! When I was of your age, such a description would have made me

fly like a rocket! The aunt, indeed! Odd's life! when I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

Abs. Not to please your father, sir?

Sir Anth. To please my father! zounds! not to please—Oh, my father—odd so! yes, yes; if my father indeed had desired—that's quite another matter. Though he wa'n't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Abs. I dare say not, sir.

Sir Anth. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful.

Abs. Sir, I repeat it,—if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind. Now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back; and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

Sir Anth. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite, a vile, insensible stock. You a soldier! You're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on! Odd's life! I have a great mind to marry the girl myself.

Abs. I am entirely at your disposal, sir; if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the aunt; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady—'tis the same to me—I'll marry the niece.

Sir Anth. Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or—but come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must—come, now—damn your demure face!—come, confess, Jack, you've been lying—ha'n't you! You have been playing the hypocrite, hey!—I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Abs. I am sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken.

Sir Anth. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me; I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you. Come along; I'll never forgive you if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, egad, I will marry the girl myself. [*Exeunt.*

In the 'School for Scandal,' Lady Teazle, a beautiful country-bred girl, has married Sir Peter Teazle, a man

nearly three times her age, whom she rather wearies by her eagerness for amusement, though he is so fond of her that he would willingly procure her every gratification, were it not that his fretfulness and her petulance lead them to continual quarrels. But at bottom they are both thoroughly amiable and good-hearted, so that the play ends by the establishment of a perfect reconciliation between them. The following scene is an admirable picture of the way in which quarrels between sincere friends often arise out of nothing but little infirmities of temper.

(The School for Scandal, Act iii. Sc. i.)

Enter LADY TEAZLE.

Lady Teaz. Lud! Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.

Sir Pet. Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady Teaz. I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good-humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

Sir Pet. Two hundred pounds; what an't I to be in a good humour without paying for it! But speak to me thus, and, i' faith, there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it, but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady Teaz. Oh, no; there—my note of hand will do as well.

Sir Pet. And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you; but shall we always live thus, hey?

Lady Teaz. If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

Sir Pet. Well, then, let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady Teaz. I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you. You look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth; and chuck me under the chin you would, and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow who would deny me nothing—didn't you?

Sir Pet. Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive——

Lady Teaz. Ay, so I was, and would always take your part, when my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Pet. Indeed!

Lady Teaz. Ay, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff, peevish, old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said I didn't think you so ugly by any means.

Sir Pet. Thank you.

Lady Teaz. And I dared say you would make a very good sort of a husband.

Sir Pet. And you prophesied right; and we shall now be the happiest couple——

Lady Teaz. And never differ again?

Sir Pet. No, never—though, at the same time, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very seriously; for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first.

Lady Teaz. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter; indeed you always gave the provocation.

Sir Pet. Now see, my angel! take care—contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

Lady Teaz. Then don t you begin it, my love!

Sir Pet. There, now, you—you are going on. You don't perceive, my life! that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

Lady Teaz. Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear——

Sir Pet. There! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady Teaz. No. I'm sure I don't: but, if you will be so peevish——

Sir Pet. There now! who begins first?

Lady Teaz. Why, you, to be sure. I said nothing—but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Pet. No, no, madam; the fault 's in your own temper.

Lady Teaz. Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Pet. Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

Lady Teaz. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

Sir Pet.—Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me if ever I try to be friends with you any more!

Lady Teaz. So much the better.

Sir Pet. No, no, madam: 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you,—a pert, rural coquette that had refused half the honest squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady Teaz. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old

dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty only because he never could meet with anyone who would have him.

Sir Pet. Ay, ay, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me; you never had such an offer before.

Lady Teaz. No! didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

Sir Pet. I have done with you, madam! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam. Yes, madam, you and Charles are, not without grounds——

Lady Teaz. Take care, Sir Peter; you had better not insinuate any such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Pet. Very well, madam! very well! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce! I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate, madam.

Lady Teaz. Agreed! agreed! and now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple, and never differ again you know: ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye! bye!

Sir Pet. Plagues and tortures? can't I make her angry either. Oh, I am the most miserable fellow! But I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper; no! she may break my heart, but she sha'n't keep her temper. [*Exit.*

CHAPTER V.

CLARENDON.

A.D. 1608–1674.

WE have spoken of history as affording an exception, the only exception, to the rule which young students should inflexibly lay down for themselves, of studying the writings of none but the finest writers, because the object with which we fix our attention on historical works is different from that which leads us to linger over the effects of the poet, the dramatist, or the orator. Their writings we seek for amusement and relaxation, of a high and intellectual class, indeed, and calculated to have a really beneficial effect on our minds, to refine our taste, and to elevate our feelings, but still amusement. And that will not be attained unless the style of the writers whom we select for our companions is good in all points. Our taste will not be refined by reading middling poetry, nor our feelings and aspirations elevated by heavy, ill-argued, and worse-expressed speeches. But choice language and well-turned periods, though not less attractive in a historical work than elsewhere, and perhaps not less indispensable to its permanent reputation and popularity, are nevertheless not the first qualities which we seek. We read such works for information. The first thing, therefore, that we require is to be able to depend on the correctness of the account presented to us; in other words, on the strict veracity, candour, and impartiality of the writer. When we have obtained this confidence in the general accuracy of the statements submitted to us, our next wish is to be enabled to form a sound estimate of the value of the facts related, of their bearing on subsequent events and on the characters of the chief actors in them. And with this desire we next demand in a historian weight of thought, grasp of

mind, largeness of view, and sobriety of judgment. These qualities, therefore, in a historian are of far greater importance than any graces of style. Not, indeed, that picturesqueness, vivacity, vigour, are less admirable here than elsewhere. As making the study attractive they are far from insignificant. It is only meant that they do not come first, and are no substitute for the more sterling qualities. Without impartiality and fidelity in relating the facts, history is no better than a romance or a party pamphlet. Without judgment in estimating their value it is still but a bald chronicle, little better than an old almanac. But, as long as these qualities are found in a historical work, we must not be deterred from the study of it because the author does not add to them descriptive power, or skill in rounding off his sentences. It is, however, our peculiar good fortune that the literature of our country presents a most unusual number of writers in whom all the requisites of a great historian are combined. And in many respects he who comes first in chronological order yields to none of his fellow-labourers in the same field.

The life of Edward Hyde, better known by his title of Earl of Clarendon, belongs to the history of his country. He was born in 1608, as the son of a country gentleman in Wiltshire, and on leaving Oxford he was sent to London to study law, a profession in which the eminence of his uncle, Nicholas Hyde, at that time Chief Justice, seemed to afford him a prospect of early advancement. The contest between the King and his Parliament had, in the opinion of many, terminated by Charles's assent to the Petition of Right; but Hyde's father apparently did not agree with that opinion, but foresaw other disputes of the same kind, since it is recorded that, 'when his son first engaged in the law, he exhorted him with great earnestness to shun the practice, too common in that profession, of straining every point in favour of prerogative, and perverting so useful a science to the suppression of liberty.'[1] The admonition was impressed on the young man's mind with peculiar solemnity, since, as Hume, who has given us the account, continues: 'In the midst of these rational and virtuous

[1] Hume, ch. lxiv.

counsels he was suddenly seized with apoplexy and died.' And for many years Hyde showed how strongly he was imbued with its spirit, in the Parliament of 1640 enrolling himself in the country party, and when he strained points of law at all, straining them rather against than in favour of the King and his ministers.

It was soon seen that his abilities were such as to make him independent of his uncle's patronage; he rapidly rose into notice both as a sound lawyer and a powerful advocate, but he was not a mere lawyer. From his youth he was an eager student of general literature, and especially cultivated the acquaintance of Ben Jonson, then by general consent esteemed the chief ornament of the literary world; though after a time this familiarity was lessened by the peevish ill-temper and absurd pretensions of the poet, who thought himself slighted because the young lawyer would not entirely neglect the study of his profession for his society. In the year 1638 he greatly raised his forensic reputation by venturing to appear as counsel for some merchants in a suit which they had instituted against the Lords of the Treasury; though it was an evil sign of the times when it could be thought that any man ran any risk, or could possibly give the least offence, by discharging so plain a professional duty. But in the opinion of his contemporaries it marked him out as a man of an unusually independent spirit; many expressed a wish to see him in the House of Commons, and when, in 1640, Charles found himself compelled again to seek the advice of the great council of the nation, and issued writs for a new Parliament, the first that had been summoned since Hyde had come of age, he was returned as member for Shaftesbury, and found the leaders of the country party predisposed to welcome him as a valuable acquisition to their ranks, to which, on many subjects, his legal knowledge made him a recruit of great importance, since many of the abuses which Pym and Hampden were most eager to extinguish were connected with the administration of the law, as carried out in the Earl Marshal's Court, the Star Chamber, and other tribunals.

But he was of too independent and honest a spirit to

bind himself wholly to that party. He was not afraid to oppose Hampden when factiously endeavouring to procure a repeal of supply by a side wind; while, on the other hand, having some personal acquaintance with Laud, he strove more than ever to persuade him to recommend moderation to the King, especially urging him to prevent the threatened dissolution of the 'Short Parliament,' giving advice which did not succeed, since that Parliament, by one of Charles's most fatal acts of impolicy, was dissolved a few weeks after its meeting.

In the Long Parliament Hyde sat as member for Saltash. And, as in the interval the conduct of the Court had been more arbitrary than before, he now, addicting himself almost exclusively to politics, became more earnest in opposition, being very forward in procuring the abolition of the Star Chamber, the High Court of Prerogative, and other tribunals which had been perverted into becoming mere engines for lawless oppression. He was also very decided in the language in which he denounced the decision of the judges on the celebrated question of ship money, a decision which was undoubtedly inconsistent, not only with Magna Charta, but with the Petition of Right which had been assented to in that very reign. Unluckily, as is not unfrequently the case in such contests, his zeal in the cause of his party grew fiercer with each successive step; and we soon find him worse employed in advocating some of the most iniquitous of all the proceedings of the Parliament, such as the impeachment of Strafford, and when that statesman's innocence of all legal offence was established, his attainder. And he also supported the bill to prevent the dissolution of the Parliament without its own consent; though he afterwards so deeply repented of his conduct in this respect that he called the bill 'a measure to remove the landmarks and destroy the foundations of the kingdom.' Indeed the only act of his at this period which gives any token of his old manliness of spirit was his opposition to his friend Lord Falkland on the subject of the exclusion of the bishops from Parliament, for his attachment to the Church and religion was sincere and undeviating.

And it was the strength and sincerity of this feeling

which, when he saw that the popular party as a body was resolved on the destruction of the Church, determined him on breaking off all connection with it, and joining the Royalists, by whom his talents and honesty were so fully appreciated that, when, in November 1641, the Parliament issued the mischievous manifesto which they called their remonstrance, it was to him that Charles entrusted the task of drawing up his reply. Shortly afterwards he became one of his ministers, with Falkland and Colepepper; and though, like all men of sense and attachment to the monarchy, he greatly disapproved of the King's unconstitutional and impolitic attempt to arrest the five members, he still continued to draw up all the papers which the Government issued from time to time, and which were so powerful in argument, and produced so great an effect on the country in general, that the leaders of the other side began to attack him with virulence; one member even giving notice of a motion to enquire by whose advice the King was acting, a motion which evidently was meant as a threat of impeachment. In the spring of 1642 he withdrew from the House of Commons to join his royal master in the North, was present at the raising of the standard at Nottingham and at the battle of Edgehill, and was very useful in obtaining supplies for the King, being especially instrumental in inducing the Universities to send in their plate to be coined. When the difficulties of the Exchequer became too great for Colepepper's skill to manage, Hyde succeeded him as Chancellor, and for the next three years was practically the Prime Minister, fixing his residence at Oxford, to manage all the proceedings of the King's Parliament which sat in that venerable and faithful city. In the negotiations at Uxbridge he was the leading Commissioner on the King's side, where again he distinguished himself by the resolute stand which he made in support of the Church and Episcopacy. But his efforts to effect an accommodation were vain, as unquestionably one portion of the Parliamentary Commissioners had from the first resolved that they should be; and there was no peace for England till that more violent section of the King's opponents had overborne not only him but their own milder and honester

colleagues, and had attained the power to involve both religion and monarchy in one common destruction.

In 1645 Hyde relinquished the guidance of affairs at Oxford, to undertake what the King considered a still more important duty. Though the Prince of Wales was but a boy of fourteen, so many of the leading gentlemen of the western counties, in which lay a great portion of the King's strength, urged the propriety of sending him thither as a head around whom the well-affected might rally, that he was appointed 'General of all the King's forces in that district, and Commander of the Western Association,' and Hyde received the appointment of president of a council of both civil and military officers by whose advice his operations were to be guided. And at the beginning of the next year, when, after the fatal battle of Naseby, the towns in Somersetshire fell one after another into the hands of the conquerors, and it was judged unsafe for the Prince to remain in any part of the kingdom, Hyde, by the King's express command, conducted him to Jersey, and though the Prince shortly afterwards joined his mother at Paris, he himself remained in that island for above two years, in order to be the more easily able to keep up a communication with his sovereign, to whom his misfortunes seemed only the more closely to attach him.

It was during his residence at Jersey that he commenced the great work to which he owes his literary reputation: his 'History of the Rebellion,'

> —— quæque ipse miserrima vidit
> Et quorum pars magna fuit,

with the avowed object of vindicating the sounder part of the nation from the charge of 'universal apostasy from their religion and allegiance' to which 'the prosperous wickedness of those times of which he wrote' might seem to lay it open—though he probably was as yet far from foreseeing the fouler crimes on which the leaders of the army had already secretly resolved—and 'that the memory of those who, out of duty and conscience, had opposed that torrent which did overwhelm them, might not lose the recompense due to their virtue.' It was not strange that

Charles, to whom the undertaking was communicated, should take, as he did take, the most lively interest in a work thus designed to do with posterity that justice to his character and abilities which his own age refused him: he even assisted in it, sending the historian a narrative of the most important transactions which had taken place between the time when Hyde quitted Oxford and his own escape to the Scottish camp, and of which therefore Hyde could have no personal knowledge; as, at a later period, he received from the Prince detailed memorials of Rupert's operations.

Shortly before the King's murder, Hyde, always regulating his movements by his direction, rejoined the Prince at Paris; and till the Restoration acted continually as his chief councillor and minister, though often thwarted by Queen Henrietta, who, desiring to exercise over her son the same fatal influence which had been so pernicious to her too facile husband, sought to determine his mind to such arbitrary principles of government as are utterly at variance with the spirit of English law, and were at least equally calculated to prevent all chance of his recovery of his kingdom; and which, on both grounds, Hyde opposed with all his power. The purport of the advice which he gave was so generally known and correctly estimated in England, that on Cromwell's death, Charles, shrewdly perceiving how greatly it would aid his cause to make, as it were, public avowal of his influence over him, appointed him Lord Chancellor, an office which he retained for the first seven years of his actual reign. On the Restoration he received the title of Earl of Clarendon, by which he has ever since been known, and was so generally recognised as the head of the Government that the Duke of Ormond advised him to take the Lord Treasurer's staff, and to become in name what everyone knew him to be in fact. But he preferred to leave that to Lord Southampton, and to content himself with that office which marked him out as the head of his profession. And of that we have the testimony of a successor of his in our own times, that he discharged the duties with a profound knowledge of law, and with the most unbending integrity. To this last virtue indeed he was too

steadfast for his permanent prosperity: it was not one much in favour with either King or courtiers, to whose licentiousness every part of his conduct was a continual reproof. While, from one of those delusions to which the mob is subject, after a few years he lost the favour of the people also, who attributed to him the sale of Dunkirk to Louis XIV., believing that he had been privately enriched by the transaction. Dunkirk House, a nickname given to a stately mansion which he was building on a plot of ground that Charles had granted to him, and part of which still exists in the Clarendon Hotel, long preserved the memory of the calumnies with which ignorant prejudice, or perhaps the artful malice of the courtiers, contrived to load him; and presently, when two great calamities, the Plague and the Fire of London, and one great disgrace, the sailing of the Dutch fleet up the Thames, had irritated the whole nation, one general desire to make him the scapegoat of all these calamities and errors seemed to seize the whole people. So general was the feeling that the eccentric Lord Bristol thought to win popularity for himself by impeaching him: but it was properly decided that one Peer could not impeach another; while his friends demonstrated that all the charges which it had been intended to bring against him could not, whether taken separately or united, amount to high treason. And the King himself, though weary of him, had grace enough to try to save him, though in a very irregular and unparliamentary way, by sending down a message to the House of Lords, in which he affirmed that, of his own certain knowledge, many of Lord Bristol's statements were untrue. But in 1667 the disgraces of the war, though in fact owing not to his mismanagement, but to the neglect of his advice (the money which had been voted for the campaign having been diverted to feed the rapacious extravagance of the king's mistresses), overthrew him. The persevering resentment of Lady Castlemaine at last overcame Charles's scruples at abandoning a servant of such tried fidelity; and, to please that most shameless of women, Charles deprived him of the seals, the Duke of York, who had married his daughter, being unable to save him. Charles did indeed make a feeble effort to protect him from

further blows by promising the Parliament never again to employ him in any post whatever; but the lady's influence was more mighty than even his, and Sir Edward Seymour moved his impeachment in the House of Commons. So ridiculous, however, in the eyes of the Commons themselves were the grounds of complaint which he alleged that, though the resolution for his impeachment was carried by a large majority, his enemies were actually ashamed to specify the charges, and limited their accusation to one of treason in general, which the House of Lords rightly pronounced to be illegal. However, Clarendon, to avoid the storm, retired from the country; and a bill was passed, one of the most shameless acts of that most shameless reign, to condemn him to perpetual exile, unless he should return to England to submit to a trial before a certain day. An illness which attacked him prevented his complying with the condition thus imposed, and accordingly he was banished; while Louis, to requite the general subserviency of the English Court to his policy, gratified its malice against him by refusing to allow him to reside in France. Subsequently, when the French king was offended by Charles's accession to the Triple Alliance, he withdrew that prohibition; and the exiled statesman, after spending a few months in the South, finally settled at Rouen, where, in 1674, he died, having, when he found his end approaching, in vain implored his ungrateful master's leave to return to his native land. He had occupied his last years in the completion of his History, which, however, he desired should not be made known to the world till all those who were directly affected by the narrative should have passed from the scene; and which, accordingly, was not published till the beginning of the next century; and even then it was not given to the world as the author left it, but was mutilated by the injudicious prudence of the editors; nor was it till 1826 that his own University, in whose great Library the manuscript had been preserved, printed it in its complete form, with a very elaborate autobiography.

Even political animosity has not ventured to deny the great merit of the History. It is said that, so deeply was he imbued with a reverence for the great classical writers that,

'to turn his mind to historical composition and to improve his taste, he read over Livy and Tacitus and almost all the works of Cicero.'[1] But, if the anecdote be true, it affords a curious instance of the difficulty which even the ablest men often find in carrying out their preconceived ideas, since few historians have written in a style less resembling the flowing picturesqueness of Livy; while from the sententious brevity of Tacitus he is still further removed. His merits are his own, as indeed are his faults; the latter (in point of style) may perhaps be limited to an extreme redundancy of expression, leading him into a length of sentence which is absolutely unparalleled. The former are great gravity of reflection, dignity and justness of sentiment, keen delicacy of observation, and a most acute discrimination of character. In the most important qualification of a historian, fidelity, he displays a degree of candour and impartiality hardly to have been expected in one who had played so important a part in most of the transactions which he was relating that he could hardly avoid looking at them without a strong prejudice on one side or the other. Yet his relation of facts and of the conduct of others has not been successfully impeached in any material instance; the only exception that is to be made to his uniform correctness seems to be when he is describing his own conduct, and there it must be admitted that we cannot implicitly rely on his statements. It was indeed not unnatural, when he reflected afterwards on the atrocious and horrible result to which the opposition of the country party to the King's lawless proceedings had led, that he should have learnt to think more of the evils which had actually ensued, of the death of one king, of the protracted exile of another, of the downfall of the Church, of the still severer tyranny of Cromwell, than of the dangers which that opposition had checked in the bud and had never allowed to be felt as evils. And, as he himself had been for years a prominent member of that party on whose measures he had thus learnt to look with abhorrence, it was perhaps not greatly to be wondered at that he should endeavour at times to conceal how large a share he had borne in them; though nothing is more certain than that

[1] Lord Campbell, ch. lxxvi.

in some of the most inexcusable of them he had been a leader. But it is only as to his own share in transactions of which he does not in the least palliate the guilt or disguise the character, that any deduction from his credibility is required to be made. On all other matters subsequent writers of every shade of politics have agreed in regarding his work as a trustworthy record of the most eventful period in our annals, and as one, even if we look at nothing beyond the style, whose merits so greatly outweigh its defects that the attention of the reader is as closely rivetted by its dignity and force, as by the lighter graces of more rhetorically trained artists.

The first extract contains his character of the King; dictated indeed by strong affection, but drawn with such discernment and impartiality that even those least friendly to the memory of Charles I. have found but little to cavil at in it; while the language is so felicitously chosen, the sentences are so well balanced, and the whole style is so full of dignity, that, even were the matter of far inferior value, the passage would still deserve to be studied as a model for compositions of such a kind.

(History of the Rebellion, book xi.).

But it will not be unnecessary to add a short character of his person, that posterity may know the inestimable loss which the nation then underwent, in being deprived of a Prince whose example would have had a greater influence upon the manners and piety of the nation than the most strict laws can have. To speak first of his private qualifications as a man, before the mention of his princely and royal virtues; he was, if ever any, the most worthy of the title of an honest man; so great a lover of justice, that no temptation could dispose him to a wrongful action, except it was so disguised to him that he believed it to be just. He had a tenderness and compassion of nature which restrained him from ever doing a hard-hearted thing; and therefore he was so apt to grant pardon to malefactors, that the judges of the land represented to him the damage and insecurity to the public that flowed from such his indulgence. And then he restrained himself from pardoning either murders or highway robberies, and quickly discerned the fruits of his severity by a wonderful reformation of those enormities. He was very punctual and regular in his devo-

tions; he was never known to enter upon his recreations or sports, though never so early in the morning, before he had been at public prayers; so that on hunting days his chaplains were bound to a very early attendance. He was likewise very strict in observing the hours of his private cabinet devotions; and was so severe an exactor of gravity and reverence in all mention of religion, that he could never endure any light or profane word, with what sharpness of wit soever it was covered: and though he was well pleased and delighted with reading verses made upon any occasion, no man durst bring before him anything that was profane or unclean. That kind of wit had never any countenance then. He was so great an example of conjugal affection, that they who did not imitate him in that particular durst not brag of their liberty: and he did not only permit, but direct his bishops to prosecute those scandalous vices, in the ecclesiastical courts, against persons of eminence and near relation to his service.

His kingly virtues had some mixture and alloy, that hindered them from shining in full lustre, and from producing those fruits they should have been attended with. He was not in his nature very bountiful, though he gave very much. This appeared more after the Duke of Buckingham's death, after which those showers fell very rarely; and he paused too long in giving, which made those to whom he gave less sensible of the benefit. He kept state to the full, which made his Court very orderly; no man presuming to be seen in a place where he had no pretence to be. He saw and observed men long before he received them about his person, and did not love strangers nor very confident men. He was a patient hearer of causes, which he frequently accustomed himself to at the Council Board, and judged very well; and was dexterous in the mediating part, so that he often put an end to causes by persuasion, which the stubbornness of men's humours made dilatory in courts of justice.

He was very fearless in his person; but, in his riper years, not very enterprising. He had an excellent understanding, but was not confident enough of it, which made him oftentimes change his own opinion for a worse, and follow the advice of men that did not judge so well as himself. This made him more irresolute than the conjuncture of his affairs would admit; if he had been of a rougher and more imperious nature, he would have found more respect and duty. And his not applying some severe cures to approaching evils proceeded from the lenity of his nature, and the tenderness of his conscience, which, in all cases of blood, made him choose the softer way, and not hearken to severe counsels how reasonably soever urged. This only restrained him from pur-

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suing his advantage in the first Scottish expedition, when, humanly speaking, he might have reduced that nation to the most entire obedience that could have been wished. But no man can say he had then many who advised him to it, but the contrary, by a wonderful indisposition all his council had to the war, or any other fatigue. He was always a great lover of the Scottish nation, having not only been born there, but educated by that people, and besieged by them always, having few English about him till he was king, and the major number of his servants being still of that nation, who he thought could never fail him. And among these no man had such an ascendant over him, by the humblest insinuations, as Duke Hamilton had.

As he excelled in all other virtues, so in temperance he was so strict, that he abhorred all debauchery to that degree, that at a great festival solemnity where he once was, when very many of the nobility of the English and Scots were entertained, being told by one who withdrew from thence what vast draughts of wine they drank, and 'that there was one Earl who had drank most of the rest down, and was not himself moved or altered,' the king said 'that he deserved to be hanged;' and that Earl coming shortly after into the room where his Majesty was, in some gaiety, to show how unhurt he was from that battle, the king sent one to bid him withdraw from his Majesty's presence, nor did he in some days after appear before him.

So many miraculous circumstances contributed to his ruin, that men might well think that heaven and earth conspired it. Though he was, from the first declension of his power, so much betrayed by his own servants that there were very few who remained faithful to him, yet that treachery proceeded not always from any treasonable purpose to do him harm, but from particular and personal animosities against other men. And afterwards the terror all men were under of the Parliament, and the guilt they were conscious of themselves, made them watch all opportunities to make themselves gracious to those who could do them good; and so they became spies upon their master, and from one piece of knavery were hardened and confirmed to undertake another; till at last they had no hope of preservation but by the destruction of their master. And after all this, when a man might reasonably believe that less than a universal defection of three nations could not have reduced a great king to so ugly a fate, it is most certain that, in that very hour when he was thus wickedly murdered in the sight of the sun, he had as great a share in the hearts and affections of his subjects in general, was as much beloved, esteemed, and longed for by the people in general of the three nations, as any of his predecessors

had ever been. To conclude: he was the worthiest gentleman, the best master, the best friend, the best husband, the best father, and the best Christian that the age in which he lived produced. And if he were not the greatest king, if he were without some parts and qualities which have made some kings great and happy, no other prince was ever unhappy who was possessed of half his virtues and endowments, and so much without any kind of vice.

The candour and inflexible honesty with which Clarendon judges his contemporaries is, perhaps, even more shown by his character of Cromwell, whom he had still greater reason to hate, as the cause of his long banishment from his native land, than he had to love Charles; but even his detestation of Cromwell's crimes does not blind him to his talents.

(Book xv.)

He was one of those men, *quos vituperare ne inimici quidem possent, nisi ut simul laudent,* whom his very enemies could not condemn without commending him at the same time: for he could never have done half that mischief without great parts of courage, industry, and judgment. He must have had a wonderful understanding in the natures and humours of men, and as great a dexterity in applying them, who, from a private and obscure birth (though of a good family), without interest or estate, alliance or friendship, could raise himself to such a height, and compound and knead such opposite and contradictory tempers, humours, and interests into a consistence that contributed to his designs and to their own destruction; whilst himself grew insensibly powerful enough to cut off those by whom he had climbed, in the instant that they projected to demolish their own building. What was said of Cinna may very justly be said of him: 'ausum eum quæ nemo auderet bonus; perfecisse quæ a nullo, nisi fortissimo, perfici possent': he attempted those things which no good man durst have ventured on, and achieved those in which none but a valiant and great man could have succeeded. Without doubt, no man with more wickedness ever attempted anything, or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty. Yet wickedness as great as his could never have accomplished those designs without the assistance of a great spirit, an admirable circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution.

When he appeared first in the Parliament he seemed to have a person in no degree gracious, no ornament of discourse, none of those talents which use to conciliate the affections of the stander-

by; yet as he grew into place and authority his parts seemed to be raised, as if he had had concealed faculties till he had occasion to use them, and when he was to act the part of a great man he did it without any indecency, notwithstanding the want of custom.

After he was confirmed and invested Protector by the humble petition and advice, he consulted with very few upon any action of importance, nor communicated any enterprise he resolved upon, with more than those who were to have principal parts in the execution of it, nor with them sooner than was absolutely necessary. What he once resolved, in which he was not rash, he would not be dissuaded from, nor endure any contradiction of his power and authority, but extorted obedience from them who were not willing to yield it.

Thus he subdued a spirit that had been often troublesome to the most sovereign power, and made Westminster Hall as obedient and subservient to his commands as any of the rest of his quarters. In all other matters which did not concern the life of his jurisdiction he seemed to have great reverence for the law, rarely interposing between party and party. As he proceeded with this kind of indignation and haughtiness with those who were refractory, and durst contend with his greatness, so towards all who complied with his good pleasure, and courted his protection, he used great civility, generosity, and bounty.

To reduce three nations, which perfectly hated him, to an entire obedience to all his dictates, to awe and govern those nations by an army that was indevoted to him, and wished his ruin, was an instance of a very prodigious address. But his greatness at home was but a shadow of the glory he had abroad. It was hard to discover which feared him most: France, Spain, or the Low Countries, where his friendship was current at the value he put upon it. As they did all sacrifice their honour and their interest to his pleasure, so there is nothing he could have demanded that either of them would have denied him. To manifest which there needs only two instances. The first is, when those of the valley of Lucerne had unwarily risen in arms against the Duke of Savoy, which gave occasion to the Pope and the neighbour princes of Italy to call and solicit for their extirpation, and their Prince positively resolved upon it, Cromwell sent his agent to the Duke of Savoy, a prince with whom he had no correspondence or commerce, and so engaged the Cardinal, and even terrified the Pope himself, without so much as doing any grace to the English Roman Catholics (nothing being more usual than his saying 'that his ships in the Mediterranean should visit Civita Vecchia, and that the sound of his cannon should be heard in Rome') that the Duke of Savoy thought it necessary to restore all that he had taken from them,

and did renew all those privileges they had formerly enjoyed and newly forfeited. . . .

To conclude his character, Cromwell was not so far a man of blood as to follow Machiavel's method, which prescribes, upon a total alteration of government, as a thing absolutely necessary, to cut off all the heads of those, and extirpate their families, who are friends to the old one. It was confidently reported that in the council of officers it was more than once proposed 'that there might be a general massacre of all the royal party, as the only expedient to secure the government,' but that Cromwell would never consent to it; it may be out of too great a contempt for his enemies. In a word, as he was guilty of many crimes against which damnation is denounced, and for which hell-fire is prepared, so he had some good qualities which have caused the memory of some men in all ages to be celebrated. He will be looked upon by posterity as a brave, wicked man.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERTSON.

A.D. 1721–1793.

TILL the middle of the eighteenth century there had been several causes which had contributed to prevent those who were capable of such an undertaking from devoting themselves to historical writing. For, above all other classes of literature, historical composition, if the writer desires success, by which I mean literary reputation and profit in his own day, requires a time free from any extreme violence of party animosity. And so conscious of this was the great historical writer whom I have already mentioned, Lord Clarendon, that though, as we have seen, he devoted great labour to writing a history of his own time, he abstained from publishing his work, which was not given to the world till many years after his death. But by the close of the reign of George II., the bitterness of party feeling had been greatly subdued, if not wholly extinguished by the failure of the last rebellion; it was no longer dangerous to express one's opinion on past events. And the consequence was that those who felt within themselves the qualities necessary to enable them to shine in such works eagerly betook themselves to the composition of history, and almost simultaneously three writers of great ability descended into the field which had been so long entirely neglected, and as yet, as far as Britain was concerned, at best but partially cultivated. Two of them came from Scotland, a proportion which might seem to foreshadow the special industry and ability with which since that day her sons have applied themselves to historical researches. Dr. Robertson was born at Borthwick in the county of Edinburgh, in 1721, being the son of the Presbyterian minister of that town, who brought him up to his own profession. His talents speedily procured him

preferment; and, as the preacher at the Grey Friars' Church in Edinburgh, he won a high reputation for eloquence. Nor, even when he began to apply himself to literature, did he so wholly devote himself to it as to neglect or even greatly to abate his attention to his clerical duties. It is remarkable that the circumstance which seems first to have suggested to him the idea of attaining a more widespread fame than his position as a parish priest could open to him, arose from the agitation which in the present generation has caused a schism in the Presbyterian body. A party within the Scotch Church was already raising a clamour against the system of patronage, which Robertson put himself forward to resist. He regarded the existing arrangement as a condition on which the Estates and Parliament substituted Presbytery for Episcopacy, and considered any attempt to subvert it in some degree a breach of faith; while, since to make any alteration would be a mere concession to unreasoning agitation, he thought it still more objectionable as a precedent. In the meetings of the General Assembly he therefore contended with great earnestness and ability against any change; and in his different speeches displayed such historical knowledge, and such skill in drawing historical inferences, as opened to him a wider acquaintance with society, and led his friends, and probably himself also, to form a higher idea of his general ability than had been previously conceived. For we have the testimony of some of their own body that till this time the Presbyterian clergy had been but poorly esteemed in Scotland. There are few who have not read the description which Macaulay, in the third chapter of his history, has drawn of the English clergy of the preceding century, tinctured, indeed, with that habitual exaggeration which makes him less trustworthy as a guide than he is fascinating as a painter, and in this instance additionally embittered by his recollection of the resistance which many, and those not the least distinguished of their body, offered to his favourite hero, William III., but still having a foundation of truth: he, it will be remembered, though he admits that a few men of high family, younger sons of peers and others of that class, might still

be found in holy orders, affirms that the view which, as a general rule, was taken of their position, and especially of the position of the rural as distinguished from the town clergy, was that they were scarcely gentlemen, while their learning and manners corresponded rather to the estimation in which they were held than to the expectations which might have been formed of the members of a profession which both requires a high education and also affords unusual opportunities to the scholar. The opinion entertained of the Presbyterian ministers in Scotland as a body in the early part of the last century was certainly not higher. And, among his other claims to notice, Dr. Robertson seems fairly entitled to this praise also, that he was the man who principally contributed to elevate their position as members of society; and by so doing to raise the standard of knowledge and accomplishment among them. For no surer stimulus excites a man to acquire knowledge than the feeling that he is placed in a situation in which learning and refinement are expected of him. And we may see a signal proof of the reputation which Robertson's exertions in the General Assembly had procured him, and likewise of the opportunities for further improvement which it opened to him, in the circumstance of his being admitted as a member of a society in Edinburgh, which met weekly for the discussion of literary and scientific subjects, and of which men of such pre-eminent ability and celebrity as Wedderburn (afterwards Lord Chancellor of England), Sir Gilbert Elliot (one of the English ministry), Lord Hailes, Lord Monboddo, and Lord Elibank (judges whose names have come down even to our day), David Hume, and Adam Smith were already members. For a man to hold his ground in such a company required no scanty capacity and acquirements; but there is no doubt that Robertson not only maintained but increased his reputation. And he made honorable use of his growing influence when he stood forward as the champion of Home, who was also a Presbyterian minister, on the occasion of his being arraigned at the bar of the General Assembly for writing a play.

His exertions for his friend were unsuccessful, for Home

was compelled to resign his living; but the result did not abate the inclination which his champion had begun to entertain of seeking fame as an author of a different class. Next to theology, history had ever been his favourite study; and in 1759 he came before the world as the historian of his native land. He entitles his work, indeed, only 'The History of Scotland during the reigns of Mary and James;' but his first book, which is devoted to a preliminary sketch of the earlier annals of the country, contains as much information as could be collected relating to the different sovereigns who had ruled the country from the days of the first who bore the name of James, the prince whom Henry IV. of England intercepted, detained, and educated in England: a training from which, in the opinion of the historian, both he and his kingdom derived great benefit.

It may probably be said with truth that no first work of an author was ever equally successful. It was at once recognised as a work of first-rate excellence. It was as warmly praised by men of fashion and superficial accomplishments, such as Horace Walpole, as by Hume, who, as a labourer in the same field, must be considered a sounder judge of the difficulties of the task. The success of the work is the more remarkable if compared with the fate of Hume's first volumes, which had been published a few years before, and which, as I shall have occasion to mention hereafter, were very coldly received on their first appearance. It procured him preferment of the kind which was at once most honourable and most congenial to his own inclinations. He was made Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and Historiographer for Scotland to the King; and, stimulated by the general approbation, he at once began to deliberate on the subject of a fresh work. The King himself recommended him the history of England; but he had formed a more correct judgment than His Majesty of the real excellence of Hume's work, and of the renown which it must eventually attain; and, after consulting many friends, he finally decided on taking the reign of the great Emperor Charles V. for his theme. It was a fortunate choice; the very extensiveness of the subject was well calculated to display his peculiar talent

of connecting transactions apparently detached and distinct in one harmonious narrative; the importance of the religious movement which was the especial feature of the time, afforded him a singular opportunity of displaying his impartiality and candour; while the remarkable character of the Emperor and his chief rival, Francis I., severely tested his powers of discrimination and the correctness of his judgment. It is not too much to say that he proved fully equal to the difficulties of his undertaking. And a most convincing proof of the ability with which he executed his task is supplied by the fact that, after all the additional light which has been thrown on a great portion of the history of Spain by the opening to scholars of the Spanish archives, the most recent author who has treated of the transactions of that age, Mr. Prescott, has found nothing to correct or alter in his narrative of the reign of the great Emperor while he retained his throne; and has only been able to add some details of his life after his abdication, of which, till the treasures of Simancas were unlocked, there were no means of arriving at a knowledge. This second work at once made him a rich man; and eight years afterwards, in 1777, he produced his third great work, the History of America, which was almost equally praised, though the outbreak of the war between Britain and the American colonies, which broke out while the work was in progress, prevented his making it as comprehensive as he had originally designed. He felt that while the war was still raging, 'enquiries and speculations concerning ancient forms of policy and laws of the colonies, which existed no longer, could not be interesting.' And therefore, with the exception of a brief account of the early history of New England and Virginia, he confined himself to the history of the Spanish settlements in the New World, the voyages and discoveries of Columbus, and the conquests of Mexico and Peru by Cortez and Pizarro. This work has in the present day been in some degree superseded by the more elaborate and detailed narratives of Prescott, as his history of Scotland has been by the more recent volumes of Tytler and Burton, who have had access to sources of information which were not open to

him; but when it originally came out it was deservedly admired as much as either of those which had preceded it. And it greatly extended his fame in England, where Burke made it the subject of his constant panegyric in all literary societies.

Almost at the same time he lost the favour of a portion of his own countrymen, or at least of the citizens of Edinburgh, whose bigotry was offended by the liberal views which he took of religious differences. The fanaticism which disgraced London with the Protestant riots of 1780 was not confined to the English metropolis; but outbreaks little less furious were excited in Edinburgh by the intelligence of the measures which were passed in 1778 for the relief of the Roman Catholics from some of the political disabilities which had been enacted at the time of the Revolution, but which the notorious abandonment of all the plans for the restoration of the Stuarts rendered no longer necessary or even defensible. The mob attacked the houses of all those whom they understood to have been favorable to the bill; and as Robertson's celebrity had made his opinions on the subject especially notorious, they fell on his house with peculiar fury, hoping to lay hands on himself and murder him, nor was it without difficulty that he was protected by the troops who were sent down to the scene of outrage. But the blind malice of a band of ruffians could not diminish the esteem in which he was held by all whose judgment was valuable; and he enjoyed the respect of all those who were able to appreciate virtue and talent, till his death, which happened in 1793, when he had just completed his seventy-second year.

The circumstance that, above a hundred years after its publication, his account of one of the most important periods of European history, the reign of Charles V., is still the standard work on the subject, is of itself a sufficient proof of his great merit. His style may, perhaps, too often bear the appearance of labour. It certainly has not the simple, natural ease of his great countryman and contemporary, David Hume; but it is often powerful, not rarely picturesque, and uniformly correct and perspicuous, while his work is rich in qualities still more important in a

history than perfection of style. It shows him throughout to have been a man of inflexible honesty and impartiality, laborious in ascertaining the truth, fearless in stating it; and, if he does not display either the penetrating sagacity or largeness of view which distinguishes not only Hume, but the third writer to whom we have alluded, the historian of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, he never allows prejudice to warp his judgment, and has never written a single line which could taint the principles of the innocent, or shake the faith of the weak-minded.

Our first extract, in which our historian relates that singular conspiracy of Fiesco which took such a hold on the fancy of the busy de Retz, is a good specimen of his more elaborate style.

(Charles V. chap. viii.)

Fiesco, having thus fixed and encouraged his associates, before he gave them his last orders, he hastened for a moment to the apartment of his wife, a lady of the noble house of Cibo, whom he loved with tender affection, and whose beauty and virtue rendered her worthy of his love. The noise of the armed men who crowded the court and palace having long before this reached her ears, she concluded some hazardous enterprise to be in hand, and she trembled for her husband. He found her in all the anguish of uncertainty and fear; and as it was now impossible to keep his design concealed, he informed her of what he had undertaken. The prospect of a scene so full of horror as well as danger completed her agony; and foreboding immediately in her mind the fatal issue of it, she endeavoured, by her tears, her entreaties, and her despair, to divert him from his purpose. Fiesco, after trying in vain to soothe and to inspire her with hope, broke from a situation into which an excess of tenderness had unwarily seduced him, though it could not shake his resolution. 'Farewell!' he cried, as he quitted the apartment, 'you shall either never see me more, or you shall behold to-morrow everything in Genoa subject to your power.'

As soon as he rejoined his companions he allotted each his proper station; some were appointed to assault and seize the different gates of the city, some to make themselves masters of the principal streets or places of strength. Fiesco reserved for himself the attack of the harbour where Doria's gallies were laid up, as the post of chief importance and of greatest danger. It was now midnight, and the citizens slept in the security of peace, when this band of

conspirators, numerous, desperate, and well-armed, rushed out to execute their plan. They surprised some of the gates without meeting with any resistance. They got possession of others after a sharp conflict with the soldiers on guard. Verrina, with the galley which had been fitted out against the Turks, blocked up the mouth of the Darsena, or little harbour where Doria's fleet lay. All possibility of escape being cut off by this precaution, when Fiesco attempted to enter the gallies from the shore, to which they were made fast, they were in no condition to make resistance, as they were not only unrigged and disarmed, but had no crew on board, except the slaves chained to the oar. Every quarter of the city was now filled with noise and tumult, all the streets resounding with the cry of Fiesco and Liberty. At that name, so popular and beloved, many of the lower rank took arms, and joined the conspirators. The nobles and partisans of the aristocracy, astonished or affrighted, shut the gates of their houses, and thought of nothing but of securing them from pillage. At last the noise excited by this scene of violence and confusion reached the palace of Doria; Giaunetino started immediately from his bed, and imagining that it was occasioned by some mutiny among the sailors, rushed out with a few attendants, and hurried towards the harbour. The gate of St. Thomas, through which he had to pass, was already in possession of the conspirators, who, the moment he appeared, fell upon him with the utmost fury, and murdered him on the spot. The same must have been the fate of the elder Doria, if Jerome de Fiesco had executed his brother's plan, and had proceeded immediately to attack him in his palace; but he, from the sordid consideration of preventing its being plundered amidst the confusion, having forbid his followers to advance, Andrew got intelligence of his nephew's death, as well as of his own danger, and mounting on horseback, saved himself by flight. Amidst this general consternation a few senators had the courage to assemble in the palace of the republic. At first some of the most daring among them attempted to rally the scattered soldiers, and to attack a body of the conspirators; but, being repulsed with loss, all agreed that nothing now remained but to treat with the party which seemed to be irresistible. Deputies were accordingly sent to learn of Fiesco what were the concessions with which he would be satisfied, or rather to submit to whatever terms he should please to prescribe.

But by this time Fiesco, with whom they were empowered to negotiate, was no more. Just as he was about to leave the harbour, where everything had succeeded to his wish, that he might join his victorious companions, he heard some extraordinary

uproar on board the Admiral's galley. Alarmed at the noise, and fearing that the slaves might break their chains, and overpower his associates, he ran thither; but the plank which reached from the shore to the vessel happening to overturn, he fell into the sea, whilst he hurried forward too precipitately. Being loaded with heavy armour, he sunk to the bottom, and perished in the very moment when he must have taken full possession of everything that his ambitious heart could desire.

Our second quotation may serve to show his discrimination in the discernment of character, and his candour in judging of one of whom it has been sometimes said that none of his countrymen can speak except in the character of a partisan.

(History of Scotland, chap. ix.)

Such was the tragical death of Mary, Queen of Scots, after a life of forty-four years and two months, almost nineteen years of which she passed in captivity. The political parties which were formed in the kingdom during her reign have subsisted under various denominations ever since that time. The rancour with which they were at first animated hath descended to succeeding ages, and their prejudices as well as their rage have been perpetuated and even augmented. Among historians who were under the dominion of all these passions, and who have either ascribed to her every virtuous and amiable quality, or have imputed to her all the vices of which the human heart is susceptible, we search in vain for Mary's real character. She neither merited the exaggerated praises of the one, nor the undistinguished censure of the other.

To all the charms of beauty, and the utmost elegance of external form, she added those accomplishments which render their impression irresistible. Polite, affable, insinuating, sprightly, and capable of speaking and of writing with equal ease and dignity; sudden, however, and violent in all her attachments, because her heart was warm and unsuspicious. Impatient of contradiction, because she had been accustomed from her infancy to be treated as a queen. No stranger on some occasions to dissimulation, which in that perfidious court where she received her education was reckoned among the necessary arts of government. Not insensible of flattery, or unconscious of that pleasure with which almost every woman beholds the influence of her own beauty. Formed with the qualities which we love, not with the talents that we admire, she was an agreeable woman rather than an illustrious queen. The vivacity of her spirit, not sufficiently tempered with sound judgment, and the warmth of her heart, which was not at all times

under the restraint of discretion, betrayed her both into errors and into crimes. To say that she was always unfortunate will not account for that long and almost uninterrupted succession of calamities which befel her. Her passion for Darnley was rash, youthful, and excessive, and though the sudden transition to the opposite extreme was the natural effect of her ill-requited love, and of his ingratitude, insolence, and brutality; yet neither these, nor Bothwell's artful address and important services, can justify her attachment to that nobleman. Even the manners of the age, licentious as they were, are no apology for this unhappy passion; nor can they induce us to look on that tragical and infamous scene which followed upon it with less abhorrence. Humanity will draw a veil over this part of her character, which it cannot approve, and may perhaps prompt some to impute some of her actions to her situation, more than to her dispositions; and to lament the unhappiness of the former, rather than accuse the perverseness of the latter. Mary's sufferings exceed, both in degree and in duration, those tragical distresses which fancy has feigned to excite sorrow and commiseration, and while we survey them we are apt altogether to forget her frailties, we think of her faults with less indignation, and approve of our tears, as if they were shed for a person who had attained much nearer to pure virtue.

With regard to the queen's person, a circumstance not to be omitted in writing the history of a female reign, all contemporary authors agree in ascribing to Mary the utmost beauty of countenance and elegance of shape of which the human form is capable. Her hair was black; though, according to the fashion of the age, she frequently wore borrowed locks, and of different colours. Her eyes were a dark grey; her complexion was exquisitely fine; and her hands and arms remarkably delicate, both as to shape and colour. Her stature was of a height that rose to the majestic. She danced, she walked, and rode with equal grace. Her taste for music was just, and she both sung and played upon the lute with uncommon skill. Towards the end of her life, long confinement, and the coldness of the houses in which she had been imprisoned, brought on a rheumatism, which often deprived her of the use of her limbs. 'No man,' says Brantome, 'ever beheld her person without admiration and love, or will read her history without sorrow.'

CHAPTER VII.

HUME.

A.D. 1711–1776.

The second of these historians, taking them in the order of the publication of their works, was David Hume, a countryman of Robertson, from whom, however, like Gibbon, of whom we shall speak next, he differs lamentably in one most important respect. The historian of Charles V. was a devout believer in, and an earnest inculcator of, the truths of religion: Hume was a sceptic, if not an infidel; though he never allowed his indifference to religion to taint his narrative, being led indeed by his political opinions to look on the Church chiefly as an engine of government, and as such to exalt her claims rather than to disparage them. And, as it happened that nearly all the eminent writers of France who lived at the same time were also infected with a similar disposition to unbelief, it might suggest a curious question how it came to pass that, while too nearly coinciding with our great historians in their irreligion, they yet took such different views of politics and systems of government? For both Hume and Gibbon were staunch supporters not only of monarchy in the abstract, but of our own government in particular; both, indeed, towards the end of their lives, accepting ministerial offices; while the French authors to whom I have alluded, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the whole body of the Encyclopédistes, were the bitterest assailants of the existing order of things, the heralds, and, in a great degree, the prompters of that terrible revolution which swept all away in unequalled ruin. It would occupy too much of our space to work out a full explanation of the causes of this difference;

but it seems to have arisen in a great degree from a circumstance which bears testimony to the superior excellence of our own constitution. Hume and Gibbon came to the examination of political questions as to an exercise to which the British mind had long been accustomed. They could examine deliberately and soberly, because they had no need to hurry their investigations lest the interference of authority should suddenly compel them to desist from them. They could venture to applaud because they could have ventured to blame if their judgment had led them to disapprove. And they were under no necessity of satisfying their pride by a parade of independence which all around them had long possessed equally with themselves. The French writers were differently situated. Till the licence of the Regent and Louis XV. had gradually relaxed all the restraints of authority, and those most which were most founded on reason or propriety, no one in France could promulgate any opinion unfavorable to the existing Government without imminent risk. Under Louis XIV., when all had been slaves, literature had been more slavish than anything else: servility and the basest adulation found their way into the preacher's pulpit, and into the critic's satire. A writer of the new generation was eager to show his fearlessness of such shackles as had trammelled the genius of his predecessors; and thus, to place himself above the suspicion of submissiveness to the Court's dictation, he selected Court, and Church, and every principle on which the one had received the reverence, and the other claimed the obedience of his fellow-citizens, for attacks of which the weapons varied with the bent of his natural genius: with ribald scoffing, or sentimental casuistry, or the cold elaboration of metaphysical argument.

Of his life Hume has himself left us a short autobiographical sketch, written with great frankness and modesty: from which we learn that, in spite of the spelling of the name which his branch of the family adopted, he belonged to the great 'Border clan,' as Scott terms it, of Home. He was born at Edinburgh in 1711, his father being a country gentleman of considerable estate. He, however, as one of the younger sons, had only a scanty patrimony, and,

on leaving the university, was sent by his father to the study of the law. But the desire of riches, which had suggested the choice of that profession for him, had no charms for himself: he had already imbibed a passion for literature, and choosing the Muse for his mistress, was resolved to seek her for herself alone. To quote his own words, 'he found an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuit of philosophy and general learning; and while his family fancied he was poring over the works of lawyers and jurists, Cicero and Virgil were the authors which he was secretly devouring.'

He overworked himself, fell ill, and for a while applied himself to commerce; but found that pursuit still more uncongenial to his disposition than the law, and 'went over to France with a view of prosecuting his studies in a country retreat; resolving to make a very rigid frugality supply his want of fortune, to maintain unimpaired his independence, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of his talents in literature.' He is probably the first instance of a man without fortune, and yet with connections by whose influence he might have hoped to rise to riches, deliberately devoting himself to literature, to the exclusion of any more profitable scheme of life. But, singular as his resolution must have seemed, he had embraced it so firmly that it was not to be shaken even by ill-success; for his first work, 'A Treatise on Human Nature,' which he gave to the world in 1738, wholly failed to attract attention. Still he continued his studies with unabated ardour, devoting himself especially to the cultivation of a proficiency in Greek, a language in which, many years later, a not unfriendly critic declared his countrymen were not formed to excel.[1] Four years later he published some essays, which at first met with a better reception, but which, he had the mortification to find, did not long retain their popularity. They procured him, however, the appointment of tutor to the Marquis of Annandale; and, when, at the end of a twelvemonth, he relinquished that employment, the post of secretary to General St. Clair, the

[1] Sydney Smith said Greek was a witch, and so could not cross the Tweed, that beautiful river being 'running water.'

commander of an expedition against some of the French ports, and afterwards ambassador to the Courts of Vienna and of Turin. These employments proved more profitable than his publications: they 'made him' reach a fortune which he called independent, though most of his friends were inclined to smile when he said so,' and modern readers will generally be disposed to share their mirth, since the sum which he looked upon as a competency fell short of a thousand pounds. But he was 'ever more disposed to see the favorable than the unfavorable side of things; a turn of mind which it is more happy to possess than to be born to an estate of ten thousand a year.'

At all events, being in his own opinion thus placed out of the reach of the frowns of fortune, he resumed his studies, and his habits of composition more eagerly than ever; being encouraged by learning that, during his absence abroad, his essays had recovered their popularity: they had been republished: they had been answered: they had even been thought worthy of being severely attacked by Dr. Warburton, then preacher to Lincoln's Inn: a man who at that time enjoyed such a reputation for learning, acuteness, and general ill-nature that it was thought an honour even to be abused by him. He published more essays, which met with various success, some being praised and others wholly unnoticed; till at last, in 1752, Fortune smiled on him in the very way in which, if he himself had had the choice, he would probably have preferred to receive her favours, and which contributed to direct his labours for the future into the path to which he owes his undying reputation. 'In 1752 the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh elected him their librarian—an office from which he received little or no pecuniary emolument, but which gave him the command of a large library,' and suggested to him the idea of writing the History of England. He did not indeed at first contemplate a complete history. 'Being frightened with the notion of continuing a narrative through a period of 1,700 years, he commenced with the accession of the House of Stuart, an epoch when, he thought, the misrepresentations of faction began chiefly to take place. And he was sanguine in his expectations of success, thinking himself the only his-

torian that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices.' The first volume was published in 1754, but its reception was more disappointing than that of his essays had been. His impartiality, instead of, as he had expected, gratifying all parties, had been approved by none. 'He was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation: English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, Churchman and sectary, freethinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united in their rage against the man who presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford. And, after the first ebullitions of their fury were over, what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to sink into oblivion. In a twelvemonth the bookseller only sold forty-five copies of it. He scarcely, indeed, heard of one man in the three kingdoms, considerable for rank or letters, who could endure the book.' The disappointment created an effect on his mind which the neglect of his former publications had been unable to produce. He was at last thoroughly disheartened. He declared afterwards that if he had not been prevented by the imminence of war between France and England, which broke out shortly afterwards, he would have retired to some provincial town in France, would have changed his name, and would never have returned to his country. Happily this plan, so suicidal to his fame, was thus rendered impracticable by circumstances, and despair was too foreign to his nature to last long. He resolved to continue his history; and in 1756 published a second volume, containing the period between the death of Charles I. and the Revolution, which was much better received, and even 'helped,' as he says, 'to buoy up its unfortunate brother.' Probably he had now written as much as he had designed when he originally commenced the work; but familiarity with the subject had so dispelled the apprehensions with which he at first contemplated 'a narrative of 1,700 years,' that he now resolved to complete the history of the country from the time of the occupation of the Romans; adopting, however, the extraordinary plan of not beginning at this point, but working backwards; so that his next volume contained the account

of the reigns of the Tudors, and that which described the earliest events was the last written. He tells us that the clamour against the first of these later volumes 'was almost equal to that which had assailed his history of the two first Stuarts;' but that the other met with somewhat better fortune, 'with tolerable, but only tolerable success.'

This accurate and candid record of the original reception of the different portions of his great work seems especially worthy of preservation, because scarcely anything can be more interesting in the case of a work of pre-eminent and standard merit than to compare the opinion formed of it by its contemporaries with the calm deliberate judgment of posterity. Nor is the lesson which it conveys without encouragement to those authors who prefer devoting their talents to undertakings of solid and permanent usefulness rather than to works of a lighter stamp which fall in more with the taste and fashion of the day; though they are only writers conscious of great abilities and of a high purpose that can thus postpone present, though transitory, applause to eventual but enduring fame.

In one way, however, Hume's writings were from the first not wholly unsuccessful: they brought him money. He tells us that 'the copy-money given him by the booksellers much exceeded anything previously known in England, so that he became not only independent but opulent.' And he was preparing to retire into the country, and to pass the rest of his life in philosophical studies, when he was invited by the Marquis of Hertford, who, on the restoration of peace, was sent as ambassador to Paris, to accompany him as Secretary to the Embassy. He accepted the post, and on Lord Hertford's resignation, he became Under Secretary of State, under that nobleman's brother General Conway. But the trammels of office were not to his taste: in 1769 he returned to Scotland, and there, seven years afterwards, he died.

The rapidity with which his history was executed, at a time when but little aid was to be derived from the labours of any predecessors in the same field, shows, not, if fairly considered, that he did not devote himself to such diligent research as is the boast of some modern historians; but

that, in fact, the means for such investigation were not at that time accessible. Original documents, where they were known to exist, were jealously guarded. And Hume had to trust to his innate sagacity to extract the truth from sources which to a less penetrating intellect would scarcely have conveyed any indication of information. Yet so great was his native shrewdness that, while drawing only from materials open to all, he threw a perfectly new light on many of the most important transactions and greatest characters in our annals, which since his time has been generally admitted to be the true one. Thus, to take a single instance, Hallam gives him the just praise of having been the first to call attention to the real character of Edward I. Professor Smyth has charged him with writing, especially when describing the reign of Charles I., in the spirit of an advocate rather than of an umpire, with having looked for evidence chiefly on one side of the question, while wilfully neglecting the arguments which might be and indeed which had been adduced on the other. But the accusation is only true to a small extent. For though undoubtedly he espouses the cause of the King after the struggle in Parliament developed into armed rebellion, yet he never conceals, and does not greatly palliate, his early errors; and he points out the imprudence of his partisans, and the degree to which their injudicious violence exasperated the fury of his enemies, with unshrinking candour; while, in his account of the earlier ages, during which the foundations of the constitution were being laid, he shows an invariable leaning to the side of liberty. The man who wrote that[1] 'on the whole the English have no reason, from the example of their ancestors, to be in love with the picture of absolute monarchy or to prefer the unlimited authority of the prince, and his unbounded prerogatives, to that noble liberty, that sweet equality, and that happy security by which they are at present distinguished above all nations in the universe,' certainly has no right to be branded as the champion of arbitrary power; and the severe condemnation with which he visits the conduct of the party opposed to Charles's government, with all its subdivisions, both religious

[1] Appendix III. to ch. xliv.

and political, proceeded scarcely more from his own political principles than from the general moderation and calmness of his temper, to which violence of any kind was odious.

Besides his penetrating sagacity, which has been already mentioned, the qualities most conspicuous in his history, as to its matter, are a depth of thought and comprehensive largeness of view which find constant vent in reflections which, though specially pertinent to the facts which he has under his contemplation, are at the same time susceptible of a wider, often of an universal application; and nowhere are these qualities more seen than in his Appendices, which it is the more desirable to point out to the notice of the student, because, if his attention were not thus drawn to them, he might be tempted to overlook them, as probably containing matter not immediately bearing on the subject. If we regard his manner, his style is universally acknowledged to be a most perfect model for historical composition. Gibbon, with all his genius and mastery of the language, avowed his despair of ever equalling 'his careless inimitable beauties,' though this description of his excellence makes it somewhat difficult to point out those beauties, as not lying on the surface. The chief characteristic of his style may probably be said to be its perfect ease, its naturalness, if it be allowable to coin a word: there is a total absence of that elaborate straining after effect, of that meretricious accumulation of ornament, which are visible in some histories not devoid of attractiveness or merit, but which seem as if they were designed to confuse and bewilder the imagination rather than to instruct and guide the judgment. There are not indeed wanting passages of such descriptive power as show that he might have attained a high place among those who have been called 'word-painters,' if he had not deliberately preferred a more sober tone as more befitting the judicial gravity with which the historian should approach a worthy subject. And with such a passage this examination of his works will conclude: but as the object for which we turn to the pages of the historian is, as has been said before, instruction rather than entertainment, the majority of the subjoined extracts will be calculated to display his depth of thought rather than his elegance of

composition; though even from them the student who would himself become an author may learn how greatly felicity of language and terse vigour of expression can lend, not only effect, but attractiveness to the gravest lessons.

The following passage, in which he examines and sets before us the effects, both direct and indirect, of the old feudal system, deserves attention, not only for its own sake, but as a specimen of the acuteness of his penetration into recondite causes, and of his thorough comprehension of the objects of the rulers and of the feelings of the nation at large in an age very remote from that in which he was writing.

(Appendix to chap. xi.)

Thus, a kingdom was considered only as a great barony, and a barony as a small kingdom. The barons were peers to each other in the national council, and in some degree companions to the king: the vassals were peers to each other in the court of barony, and companions to their baron.

But though this resemblance so far took place, the vassals, by the natural course of things, universally in the feudal constitutions fell into a greater subordination under the baron, than the baron himself under his sovereign; and these governments had a necessary and infallible tendency to augment the power of the nobles. The great chief, residing in his country-seat, which he was commonly allowed to fortify, lost, in a great measure, his connection or acquaintance with the prince, and added every day new force to his authority over the vassals of the barony. They received from him education in all military exercises; his hospitality invited them to live and enjoy society in his hall: their leisure, which was great, made them perpetual retainers on his person, and partakers of his country sports and amusements: they had no means of gratifying their ambition, but by making a figure in his train: his favour and countenance was their greatest honour: his displeasure exposed them to contempt and ignominy: and they felt every moment the necessity of his protection, both in the controversies which occurred with other vassals, and, what was more material, in the daily inroads and injuries which were committed by the neighbouring barons. During the time of general war, the sovereign, who marched at the head of his armies, and was the great protector of the state, always acquired some accession to his authority, which he lost during the intervals of peace and tranquillity; but the loose police incident to the feudal constitutions maintained a perpetual, though secret, hostility between the

several members of the state; and the vassals found no means of securing themselves against the injuries to which they were continually exposed, but by closely adhering to their chief, and falling into a submissive dependence upon him.

If the feudal government was so little favourable to the true liberty even of the military vassal, it was still more destructive of the independence and security of the other members of the state, or what, in a proper sense, we call the people. A great part of them were serfs, and lived in a state of absolute slavery or villainage: the other inhabitants of the country paid their rent in services, which were in a great measure arbitrary; and they could expect no redress of injuries, in a court of barony, from men who thought they had a right to oppress and tyrannize over them: the towns were situated either within the demesnes of the king, or the lands of the great barons, and were almost entirely subjected to the the absolute will of their master. The languishing state of commerce kept the inhabitants poor and contemptible; and the political institutions were calculated to render that poverty perpetual. The barons and gentry, living in rustic plenty and hospitality, gave no encouragement to the arts, and had no demand for any of the more elaborate manufactures: every profession was held in contempt but that of arms; and if any merchant or manufacturer rose, by industry and frugality, to a degree of opulence, he found himself but the more exposed to injuries, from the envy and avidity of the military nobles.

These concurring causes gave the feudal governments so strong a bias towards aristocracy that the royal authority was extremely eclipsed in all the European states; and instead of dreading the growth of monarchical power, we might rather expect that the community would everywhere crumble into so many independent baronies, and lose the political union by which they were cemented. In elective monarchies, the event was commonly answerable to this expectation; and the barons, gaining ground on every vacancy of the throne, raised themselves almost to a state of sovereignty, and sacrificed to their power both the rights of the crown and the liberties of the people. But hereditary monarchies had a principle of authority which was not so easily subverted; and there were several causes which still maintained a degree of influence in the hands of the sovereign.

The greatest baron could never lose view entirely of those principles of the feudal constitution which bound him, as a vassal, to submission and fealty towards his prince; because he was every moment obliged to have recourse to those principles in exacting fealty and submission from his own vassals. The lesser barons,

finding that the annihilation of royal authority left them exposed, without protection, to the insults and injuries of more potent neighbours, naturally adhered to the crown, and promoted the execution of general and equal laws. The people had still a stronger interest to desire the grandeur of the sovereign; and the king being the legal magistrate, who suffered by every internal convulsion or oppression, and who regarded the great nobles as his immediate rivals, assumed the salutary office of general guardian or protector of the commons. Besides the prerogatives with which the law invested him, his large demesnes and numerous retainers rendered him, in one sense, the greatest baron in his kingdom; and where he was possessed of personal vigour and abilities (for his situation required these advantages) he was commonly able to preserve his authority, and maintain his station as head of the community, and the chief fountain of law and justice.

An extract from another appendix displays in a marked degree his power of tracing effects to causes which to ordinary apprehensions would seem to have but a slight connection with them, if indeed they were admitted to have any.

(Appendix to chap. xliv.)

Queen Elizabeth, sensible how much the defence of her kingdom depended on its naval power, was desirous to encourage commerce and navigation; but as her monopolies tended to extinguish all domestic industry, which is much more valuable than foreign trade, and is the foundation of it, the general train of her conduct was ill calculated to serve the purpose at which she aimed, much less to promote the riches of her people. . . . . .

The retrenchment of the ancient hospitality, and the diminution of retainers, were favourable to the prerogative of the sovereign: and by disabling the great noblemen from resistance, promoted the execution of the laws, and extended the authority of the courts of justice. There were many peculiar causes in the situation and character of Henry the Seventh which augmented the authority of the crown. Most of these causes concurred in succeeding princes; together with the factions in religion and the acquisition of the supremacy, a most important article of prerogative. But the manners of the age were a general cause which operated during this whole period, and which continually tended to diminish the riches, and still more the influence, of the aristocracy, anciently so formidable to the crown. The habits of luxury dissipated the immense fortunes of the ancient barons; and as the new methods of expense gave subsistence to mechanics and merchants, who lived

in an independent manner on the fruits of their own industry, a nobleman, instead of that unlimited ascendancy which he was wont to assume over those who were maintained at his board, or subsisted by salaries conferred on them, retained only that moderate influence which customers have over tradesmen, and which can never be dangerous to civil government. The landed proprietors also, having a greater demand for money than for men, endeavoured to turn their lands to the best account with regard to profit, and either inclosing their fields, or joining many small farms into a few large ones, dismissed those useless hands, which formerly were always at their call, in every attempt to subvert the government or oppose a neighbouring baron. By all these means the cities increased; the middle rank of men began to be rich and powerful; the prince, who in effect, was the same with the law, was implicitly obeyed; and though the further progress of the same causes begat a new plan of liberty, founded on the privileges of the commons, yet in the interval between the fall of the nobles and the rise of this order, the sovereign took advantage of the present situation, and assumed an authority almost absolute.

Another extract from the same appendix affords a fair specimen of his critical taste and judgment; of the candour with which he admits the existence of great beauties in a poet whom nevertheless he cannot endure to read; and of the acuteness with which he points out the causes which produce the weariness of which he complains; so that subsequent criticisms on Spenser are little more than an expansion of the eulogies and objections which our historian has compressed into a single page.

Unhappily for literature, at least for the learned of this age, the queen's vanity lay more in shining by her own learning than in encouraging men of genius by her liberality. Spenser himself, the finest English writer of his age, was long neglected, and after the death of Sir Philip Sydney, his patron, was allowed to die almost of want. This poet contains great beauties, a sweet and harmonious versification, easy elocution, a fine imagination; yet does the perusal of this work become so tedious, that one never finishes it from the mere pleasure which it affords: it soon becomes a kind of task reading; and it requires some effort and resolution to carry us on to the end of his long performance. This effect, of which everyone is conscious, is usually ascribed to the change of manners: but manners have more changed since Homer's age; and yet that poet remains still the favourite of every reader

of taste and judgment. Homer copied true natural manners, which, however rough or uncultivated, will always form an agreeable and interesting picture; but the pencil of the English poet was employed in drawing the affectations and conceits and fopperies of chivalry, which appear ridiculous as soon as they lose the recommendation of the mode. The tediousness of continued allegory, and that too seldom striking or ingenious, has also contributed to render the Faery Queene peculiarly tiresome; not to mention the too great frequency of its descriptions, and the languor of its stanza. Upon the whole, Spenser maintains his place upon the shelves, among our English classics; but he is seldom seen on table: and there is scarcely anyone, if he dares to be ingenuous, but will confess that, notwithstanding all the merit of the poet, he affords an entertainment with which the palate is soon satiated. Several writers of late have amused themselves in copying the style of Spenser; and no imitation has been so indifferent as not to bear a great resemblance to the original; his manner is so peculiar that it is almost impossible not to transfer some of it into the copy.

We will conclude with a portion of one of his most elaborate descriptions, in which he narrates one of the most striking events in the history of modern Europe; and which is the more worthy of attention since, as we have seen, it was to the sympathy which this and other passages evince for the fallen monarch that he attributed the unfavorable reception with which his work met on its first appearance.

(Vol. vii. page 138.)

The pomp, the dignity, the ceremony of this transaction, corresponded to the greatest conception that is suggested in the annals of human kind; the delegates of a great people sitting in judgment upon their supreme magistrate, and trying him for his misgovernment and breach of trust. The solicitor, in the name of the commons, represented that Charles Stuart, being admitted king of England, and *entrusted* with a limited power, yet nevertheless, from a wicked design to erect an unlimited and tyrannical government, had traitorously and maliciously levied war against the present parliament, and the people whom they represented, and was therefore impeached as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and a public and implacable enemy to the commonwealth. After the charge was finished, the president directed his discourse to the king, and told him that the court expected his answer.

The king, though long detained a prisoner, and now produced as a criminal, sustained, by his magnanimous courage, the majesty

of a monarch. With great temper and dignity he declined the authority of the court, and refused to submit himself to their jurisdiction. He represented that, having been engaged in treaty with his two houses of parliament, and having finished almost every article, he had expected to be brought to his capital in another manner, and ere this time to have been restored to his power, dignity, revenue, as well as to his personal liberty: that he could not now perceive any appearance of the upper house, so essential a member of the constitution; and had learned that even the commons, whose authority was pretended, were subdued by lawless force, and were bereaved of their liberty: that he himself was their native hereditary king, nor was the whole authority of the state, though free and united, intitled to try him, who derived his dignity from the Supreme Majesty of Heaven: that, admitting those extravagant principles which levelled all orders of men, the court could plead no power delegated by the people, unless the consent of every individual, down to the meanest and most ignorant peasant, had been previously asked and obtained: that he acknowledged without scruple that he had a *trust* committed to him, and one most sacred and inviolable—he was intrusted with the liberties of his people, and would not now betray them, by recognising a power founded on the most atrocious violence and usurpation: that, having taken arms, and frequently exposed his life in defence of public liberty, of the constitution, of the fundamental laws of the kingdom, he was willing, in this last and most solemn scene, to seal with his blood those precious rights for which, though in vain, he had so long contended: that those who arrogated a title to sit as his judges, were born his subjects, and born subject to those laws which determined that the king can do no wrong: that he was not reduced to the necessity of sheltering himself under this general maxim, which guards every English monarch, even the least deserving; but was able, by the most satisfactory reasons, to justify those measures in which he had been engaged: that, to the whole world, and even to them his pretended judges, he was desirous, if called upon in another manner, to prove the integrity of his conduct, and assert the justice of those defensive arms to which, unwillingly and unfortunately, he had had recourse; but that, in order to preserve an uniformity of conduct, he must at present forego the apology of his innocence; lest, by ratifying an authority no better founded than that of robbers and pirates, he be justly branded as the betrayer, instead of being applauded as the martyr, of the constitution.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIBBON.

A.D. 1737–1794.

THE writer of whom I am now about to speak to you stands, in some very important respects, absolutely at the head of all historical writers. If we except authors such as Raleigh, who propose to themselves works of such enormous pretensions that they never fairly complete even the plan of them, much less execute them, no man has ever undertaken so gigantic a subject, nor one of greater importance, nor one involving more prodigious labour; and certainly no one has ever completed a far easier task with more consummate success. 'The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' is the history of the birth of all the kingdoms which have risen out of its ruins and fragments to a grander civilisation and a more real power. It is the history at once of the old world and of the new; of the old civilisation and of the new; of the old religions and of the new; and not solely of that new worship which we all profess, but of that unhallowed and imperfect copy of it which the Arabian impostor with such skill adapted to the sensual imaginations and licentious habits of his Eastern followers. Yet, vast as such a field is, Gibbon has occupied the whole of it with an industry and penetration equal to its vastness. He has left nothing untold, or even partially told; he has even indulged in episodes such as those of the origin of Mahometanism, and of the Crusades, which might fairly have been considered extraneous to his subject by anyone who was not resolved to make his work complete on all sides, and who did not feel that in fact the title of his work,

large as it was, was scarcely as comprehensive as the matter, which included the whole world, as known in the ages of which he was recording the events and describing the character. From him, almost alone among the writers of our own language, we learn the history of Clovis; of his conversion to Christianity, and of his establishment of a Frankish sovereignty over the noble country previously known as Gaul, but which now began to borrow from the race of its new prince its new appellation. It is to his pages we turn if we would learn how the mighty son of the warrior who extinguished the line, or at least the power, of the sons of Clovis, extended the authority of France over the whole of civilised Europe, with the exception of our own islands. To him the English reader owes his knowledge of the revolutions in Spain, of the tyranny of Roderic, the unpatriotic, though almost excusable, vengeance of Count Julian, and of the consequent invasion and triumph of the Moors, who for centuries wrested from Christianity the finest provinces of the Peninsula. While, Tory as he was, his innate love of liberty, joined perhaps to the historian's feeling of the opening afforded by it to forcible and picturesque description, inspired the eloquent minuteness with which he details the singular career of 'Rienzi, last of Romans.'

And it may be added that, in Gibbon's case, the perfection and accuracy of his work is so far from having been taken for granted that no book has ever been subjected to more searching examination and criticism, a criticism even not confined to his own countrymen; for his volumes have been translated by one of the most eminent foreign writers of our time, himself as profoundly versed in the history of his own and other nations as any of his contemporaries, M. Guizot; who, in preparing different works of his own, has had incessant occasion to refer to Gibbon, and to others who have treated of subjects which constitute sections of the 'Decline and Fall;' to writers on Roman finance, on Roman chronology, on Roman jurisprudence, and other kindred matters; and the result of his comparison of them all is merely a continually increasing conviction and admiration of not only the industry and the accuracy, but

the philosophical sagacity and vast general knowledge of the author; while his latest English editor, Dean Milman, editing his work with the express design of guarding the youthful reader against his irreligious bias, bears the same testimony to his generally conscientious truthfulness.[1]

Edward Gibbon was born in 1737, being the eldest son of a gentleman of fair estate in Hampshire; who was, at the time, member for Petersfield in that county. At twelve years old he was sent to Westminster, but his health was so delicate that, after a year or two, he was removed to the care of a private tutor, Mr. Francis, who was a scholar of some celebrity, as the translator of Horace, and who was also the father of the notorious author of the 'Letters of Junius,' Sir Philip Francis. However, country air soon re-established his strength, and in 1752 he was removed to Oxford, and entered at Magdalen College, where, again, he did not remain long; for in the course of the next year he renounced the Protestant for the Roman Catholic religion, the adoption of which was at that time incompatible with his position as a member of the university. The occurrence, however, shows that at that time he was not a sceptic, nor indifferent to religion. Indeed the events which followed proved that he was rather restless in his anxiety on the subject. His father, in sorrowful displeasure, refused to receive him at home, lest he should pervert his younger children, but sent him to Lausanne, where the teaching of a Protestant minister of the Genevese school, M. Pavillard, reconverted him to the Reformed religion. He remained at Lausanne for five years, studying industriously and profitably, for M. Pavillard was a man of considerable acquirements, and diversifying his studies by falling in love with a young lady, Mdlle. Curchod, who seems to have returned his affection; but his father objected to his marriage with a foreigner, and their engagement was broken off. He remained single throughout his life, but she soon afterwards married a man of a very different character, destined to a celebrity in some points of view more extended than that of Gibbon himself, and one whose influence over the fortunes of his adopted country and the world is felt to this

[1] Milman's Preface, xiv.–xvii.

day, M. Necker, a man of amiability, liberality, and integrity, but placed by an unfortunate combination of circumstances in a position to which his capacity was wholly unequal, and where the state of affairs was so critical that any misunderstanding of their real character and consequent mismanagement could not fail to be ruinous. Gibbon, however, maintained an intimacy with Madame Necker during her life, and more than one passage in the most brilliant work of her celebrated daughter, Madame de Stael, contains unmistakable and not unfriendly allusions to the great historian of the Roman Empire.

While in Switzerland he adopted the habit of keeping a journal, which has been preserved; and the character which he gives of himself at the age of twenty-six is curious in its impartiality and frankness. He seems to have set himself to work to examine his own mental and moral qualities (his personal gifts he omits, and, if one may judge from his portraits, they were not calculated to excite any particular admiration) with as perfect coolness of judgment as if he had been contemplating a perfect stranger. 'It appeared to me,' he says, 'upon enquiry, that my character was virtuous, incapable of a base action, and formed for generous ones, yet proud, violent, and disagreeable in society. Wit I have none. My imagination is rather strong than pleasing; my memory both capacious and retentive. The shining qualities of my understanding are comprehensiveness and penetration, but I want both quickness and exactness.' Nor is the candour of his avowal more striking than the accuracy of his judgment, for the qualities for which he gives himself credit are exactly those which are most conspicuous in his work, while some of the defects which he confesses are also unconcealable. It was, in fact, the idea that he had thus formed of his own talents that probably dictated the line of literature which he afterwards selected for especial cultivation.

He early conceived the desire of distinguishing himself as an author; but his first work, though published after his return to England, was composed in the French language, which a residence of five years abroad had made almost as familiar to him as English. It came out in

1761, being entitled 'Essai sur l'Étude de la Literature,' and was highly praised for its style even by the very French writers whose theories it opposed. But as his father, to whom he was now fully reconciled, was not very solicitous about his literary fame, but rather desirous that he should settle down as a country gentleman, to gratify him he accepted a company in the Hampshire militia, and as he was not inclined to do anything superficially, or by deputy, he began to study the theory of the military art in the treatises of professional writers, and its practice by making himself master of the details of discipline and the principles of the different evolutions and manœuvres used in the handling of a regiment, an employment which, in his own opinion, was of material service to him afterwards, as he obtained from it 'a much clearer notion of ancient tactics than he ever had before;' and, in describing them in his great work, derived great advantage from his acquaintance with 'the modern discipline and exercise of a battalion.'

But still he cast many a longing, lingering look at the reputation of a scholar, which was more in accordance with his inclination, inconsistent with it as were his present occupations, and which was presently revived by a visit to Paris. Hume subsequently pointed out that the purity of his English style had been impaired by his study of French authors, who indulge in more figurative and less natural forms of expression than are consistent with our severer taste and the genius of our language. But the celebrity of his *Essai* procured him now the acquaintance of the leaders of the literary world in the French capital; and, though that was far from being an advantage, since, if it did not first implant in his mind the seeds of infidelity by which nearly all the learned men of France were at that time disgraced, it certainly ripened and strengthened them; it also led him to cherish more ardently than ever the desire to make a name equal to them for himself by some elaborate work 'which might do him credit if well treated.' He revolved many subjects in his mind, nearly all of a warlike character: the Crusades; the wars of the barons against John and Henry III.; the French invasions of Italy under

Charles VIII. and his successors; but, having continued his journey to Italy, the spectacle which the old Mistress of the World presented to his well-instructed eyes suggested a new theme, and at once determined his choice. According to his own account, it was 'at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the City first started to my mind. But my original plan was circumscribed to the decline of the *city* rather than of the empire.' Some years elapsed before he began to put the design thus happily conceived into execution; but he seems never to have lost sight of it, and his studies, with which it was not in his nature to allow any distractions of business long to interfere, henceforth assumed the character of a preparation for the task he had thus imposed upon himself.

He was not without occupations of other kinds. A year or two afterwards, the death of his father put him in possession of the family estate, and he became also a member of Parliament, without any intention of taking any active part in the debates; but valuing his seat more for the introduction which it opened to him to fashionable life, of which he was somewhat fond or vain, than for the political influence attached to it, though that also was presently placed within his reach when, in 1779, he accepted the post of a Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations under Lord North. He had earned it by his proficiency in French, which led the minister to request his aid in drawing up a manifesto to be delivered as a State paper to the different cabinets of Europe in reply to a similar document published by the French when they declared war against us as allies of the Americans. But before he took office he had completed the two first volumes of his history. They were published in 1776, and met with a very different fate from that which Hume's first volume had experienced. They became at once famous; a fresh edition was called for almost immediately, and copies could hardly be supplied with sufficient rapidity. But after awhile, the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, which described the rise and progress of

Christianity, began to attract the attention and to provoke the unfavourable comments of those readers and critics whose honest zeal for piety and religion was sharpened by a prevailing suspicion that the author was, to say the least, indifferent, if not hostile, to revelation. Gibbon was surprised. His astonishment, which seems to have been genuine, has in it something hardly creditable to his insight into character, or to his penetration in estimating the feelings of his countrymen. In his memoirs we find him ascribing the tone in which he had treated the subject of the chapters thus called in question to his ignorance of or disbelief in the sincerity of their attachment to religious or doctrinal truth. And perhaps one who is himself unfortunate enough to regard such topics with his feelings could not well estimate the sensitiveness of a sincerely pious and reverent heart. In a memoir which he left behind him he mingles something of regret that he should have offended the susceptibility of such readers, with a surprise at their having taken umbrage at his language, and, according to his too usual custom, a sneer at their sincerity. 'Had I,' says he, 'believed that the majority of English believers were so fondly attached even to the shadow and name of Christianity; had I foreseen that the pious, the timid, and the prudent would feel, or affect to feel, with such exquisite sensibility, I might perhaps have softened the two invidious chapters, which would create many enemies and conciliate few friends.' Not, indeed, that the condemnation of them, even by men of unquestioned piety and shrewd judgment, was unanimous. Robertson praised the two volumes without the slightest deduction; though Hume, more acutely, while expressing his personal approbation of his tone on the subject, warned him to expect 'a clamour.' In reply to the numerous pamphlets which were published on the subject, he put forth a vindication of himself, which, however, satisfied but few, and which provoked rejoinders the more vehement that, in the later editions, he abstained from altering any of the passages most complained of. Fortunately, in the subsequent volumes no occasion was afforded for a repetition of the offence, or a renewal of the controversy. And they were received with a favour, as each came out, which

had certainly never been accorded before to so voluminous a work, which required industry to read as well as to compose. His last volumes were not published till the spring of 1788. And as he has told us of his original conception of the work, so, with equal minuteness, has he recorded the very moment of its complete execution. 'It was on the day, or rather the night of June 27, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden' (at Lausanne, where he had been living ever since the dissolution of Lord North's ministry). 'After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene. The silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotion of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that, whatever might be the future date of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.'

The last sentence apparently alludes to his consciousness of a painful disease, which he concealed from his most intimate friends, and even from his doctor, till he had suffered from it more than thirty years, not taking any advice for it till no skill could afford him relief. After the publication of his history he returned to Lausanne, and remained in Switzerland nearly five years, till the advances of the French revolutionists alarmed him for his safety. In June 1793 he returned to his own country, and there, towards the end of the autumn, he first consulted a physician; but it was too late. On the 15th of January in the next year he died; though he himself had previously been so little aware of his danger that, on the very day before, he had declared that he considered himself still a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years.

We have seen his own opinion of the qualities of his mind, and Hume's criticism on his style. The penetrating

sagacity and large comprehensiveness which he looked on as the predominant features of his intellect, and which enabled him to take in at once the event itself which was before him, with its original causes and its remote consequences, were sharpened for their work by the most invincible industry and patience, with their fruit, the most extensive learning. Of his style the chief defect is an apparent want of ease; not that it was really laboured: on the contrary, his manuscripts are said to have been singularly free from alteration or erasure. In describing grand and important events, he is stately and vigorous. He is not so destitute of wit as he conceived himself to be; but his irony, of which he was immoderately fond, is that of a rhetorician, rather than of a calm historian whose object is the truth. If he fails in any of the attributes of a great writer, it is probably in pathos. For the scepticism which, as I have mentioned, has provoked such severity of hostile comment, he is perhaps to be pitied rather than blamed. A still more indefensible defect is an indelicacy of taste which led him to gloat over the coarsest and most impure transactions and images, and which is in no degree excused by his practice (to which he appeals as his justification) of leaving the objectionable passages in what he calls 'the obscurity of a learned language.' Perhaps the surest proof that can be given of the real greatness of his work is that it has triumphed over these two grave objections, and, in spite of them, is admitted to be one a knowledge of which is indispensable to every man of education.

The following extract presents a favourable specimen of the sagacity which he often exerts in laying down general principles of government and policy; and an equally remarkable instance of his power of compression and terse description.

(Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xlix.)

There is nothing perhaps more adverse to nature and reason than to hold in obedience remote countries and foreign nations, in opposition to their inclination and interest. A torrent of barbarians may pass over the earth, but an extensive empire must be supported by a refined system of policy and oppression; in the centre, an absolute power, prompt in action and rich in resources; a swift

and easy communication with the extreme parts; fortifications to check the first effort of rebellion; a regular administration to protect and punish; and a well-disciplined army to inspire fear, without provoking discontent and despair. Far different was the situation of the German Cæsars, who were ambitious to enslave the kingdom of Italy. Their patrimonial estates were stretched along the Rhine, or scattered in the provinces; but this ample domain was alienated by the imprudence or distress of successive princes; and their revenue, from minute and vexatious prerogative, was scarcely sufficient for the maintenance of their households. Their troops were formed by the legal or voluntary service of their feudal vassals, who passed the Alps with reluctance, assumed the licence of rapine and disorder, and capriciously deserted before the end of the campaign. Whole armies were swept away by the pestilential influence of the climate: the survivors brought back the bones of their princes and nobles, and the effects of their own intemperance were often imputed to the treachery and malice of the Italians, who rejoiced at least in the calamities of the barbarians. This irregular tyranny might contend on equal terms with the petty tyrants of Italy; nor can the people, or the reader, be much interested in the event of the quarrel. But in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Lombards rekindled the flame of industry and freedom; and the generous example was at length imitated by the republics of Tuscany. In the Italian cities a municipal government had never been totally abolished; and their first privileges were granted by the favour and policy of the Emperors, who were desirous of erecting a plebeian barrier against the independence of the nobles. But their rapid progress, the daily extension of their power and pretensions, were founded on the numbers and spirit of these rising communities. Each city filled the measure of her diocese or district: the jurisdiction of the counts and bishops, of the marquises and counts, was banished from the land; and the proudest nobles were persuaded or compelled to desert their solitary castles, and to embrace the more honourable character of freemen and magistrates. The legislative authority was inherent in the general assembly; but the executive powers were intrusted to three consuls, annually chosen from the three orders of captains, valvassors, and commons, into which the republic was divided. Under the protection of equal law, the labours of agriculture and commerce were gradually revived; but the martial spirit of the Lombards was nourished by the presence of danger; and as often as the bell was rung, or the standard erected, the gates of the city poured forth a numerous and intrepid band, whose zeal in their own cause was soon guided by the use and discipline of arms. At the foot of these popular ram-

parts the pride of the Cæsars was overthrown; and the invincible genius of liberty prevailed over the two Frederics, the greatest princes of the middle ages: the first, superior perhaps in military prowess; the second, who undoubtedly excelled in the softer accomplishments of peace and learning.

The two passages which follow, descriptive of the early religion of the Arabs, and of the qualifications of Mahomet for the enterprise which he undertook, are worked up with great depth of thought; while the vigour of the second sets the individual portrayed in it before us with a power and precision which has been rarely equalled.

(Chap. l.)

The religion of the Arabs, as well as of the Indians, consisted in the worship of the sun, the moon, and the fixed stars; a primitive and specious mode of superstition. The bright luminaries of the sky display the visible image of a Deity: their number and distance convey to a philosophic, or even a vulgar eye, the idea of boundless space: the character of eternity is marked on these solid globes, that seem incapable of corruption or decay: the regularity of their motions may be ascribed to a principle of reason or instinct; and their real or imaginary influence encourages the vain belief that the earth and its inhabitants are the object of their peculiar care. The science of astronomy was cultivated at Babylon; but the school of the Arabs was a clear firmament and a naked plain. In their nocturnal marches, they steered by the guidance of the stars: their names, and order, and daily station were familiar to the curiosity and devotion of the Bedoween; and he was taught by experience to divide in twenty-eight parts the zodiac of the moon, and to bless the constellations who refreshed, with salutary rains, the thirst of the desert. The reign of the heavenly orbs could not be extended beyond the visible sphere; and some metaphysical powers were necessary to sustain the transmigration of souls, and the resurrection of bodies: a camel was left to perish on the grave, that he might serve his master in another life; and the invocation of departed spirits implies that they were still endowed with consciousness and power. I am ignorant, and I am careless, of the blind mythology of the barbarians; of the local deities, of the stars, the air, and the earth, of their sex or titles, their attributes or subordination. Each tribe, each family, each independent warrior, created and changed the rites and the object of his fantastic worship; but the nation, in every age, has bowed to the religion, as well as to the language, of Mecca.

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person—an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life, he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country; his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca: the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship, or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of thought and action and, although his designs might gradually extend with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius. The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia; and the fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers of eloquence Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian: his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view, and some fancy has been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian traveller. He compares the nations and the religions of the earth; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies; beholds with pity and indignation the degeneracy of the times; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs.

We have seen that our author has been charged, and too deservedly, with indifference, if not hostility, to Christianity. Yet few will deny the candour with which he speaks of the motives which influenced the Crusaders; and probably the superiority, not only in vigour, but in lifelike truth, of his brief sketch of the Crusades to the more prolix elaboration of other narratives, will be as rarely questioned.

(Chap. lviii.)

Of the chiefs and soldiers who marched to the holy sepulchre, I will dare to affirm that all were prompted by the spirit of enthusiasm, the belief of merit, the hope of reward, and the assurance of divine aid. But I am equally persuaded that in many it was not the sole, that in some it was not the leading principle of action. The use and abuse of religion are feeble to stem, they are strong and irresistible to impel, the stream of national manners. Against the private wars of the barbarians, their bloody tournaments, licentious loves, and judicial duels, the popes and synods might ineffectually thunder. It is a more easy task to provoke the metaphysical disputes of the Greeks, to drive into the cloister the victims of anarchy or despotism, to sanctify the patience of slaves and cowards, or to assume the merit of the humanity and benevolence of modern Christians. War and exercise were the reigning passions of the Franks or Latins. They were enjoined, as a penance, to gratify those passions, to visit distant lands, and to draw their swords against the nations of the East. Their victory, or even their attempt, would immortalise the names of the intrepid heroes of the cross; and the purest piety could not be insensible to the most splendid prospect of military glory. In the petty quarrels of Europe, they shed the blood of their friends and countrymen, for the acquisition perhaps of a castle or a village. They could march with alacrity against the distant and hostile nations who were devoted to their arms; their fancy already grasped the golden sceptres of Asia; and the conquest of Apulia and Sicily by the Normans might exalt to royalty the hopes of the most private adventurer. Christendom in her rudest state must have yielded to the climate and cultivation of the Mahometan countries; and their natural and artificial wealth had been magnified by the tales of pilgrims, and the gifts of an imperfect commerce. The vulgar, both the great and small, were taught to believe every wonder, of lands flowing with milk and honey, of mines and treasures, of gold and diamonds, of palaces of marble and jasper, and of odoriferous groves of cinnamon and frankincense. In this earthly paradise, each warrior depended on his sword to carve a plenteous and honourable establishment, which he measured only by the extent of his wishes. Their vassals and soldiers trusted their fortunes to God and their master: the spoils of a Turkish emir might enrich the meanest follower of the camp; and the flavour of the wines, the beauty of the Grecian women, were temptations more adapted to the nature, than to the profession, of the champions of the cross. The love of freedom was a powerful incitement to the multitudes who were oppressed by feudal or

ecclesiastical tyranny. Under this holy sign, the peasants and burghers, who were attached to the servitude of the glebe, might escape from a haughty lord, and transplant themselves and their families to a land of liberty. The monk might release himself from the discipline of his convent, the debtor might suspend the accumulation of usury, and the pursuit of his creditors; and outlaws and malefactors of every cast might continue to brave the laws, and elude the punishment of their crimes.

These motives were potent and numerous: when we have singly computed their weight on the mind of each individual we must add the infinite series, the multiplying powers of example and fashion. The first proselytes became the warmest and most effectual missionaries of the cross: among their friends and countrymen they preached the duty, the merit, and the recompense of their holy vow; and the most reluctant hearers were insensibly drawn within the whirlpool of persuasion and authority.

Our quotations may fitly end with the capture of Constantinople, in his description of which, Gibbon paints with great vividness the heroic efforts of Palæologus to avert the fall of the empire, and the well-directed audacity and inflexible severity of Mahomet, which, aided in a slight degree by the chance shot which drove Giustiniani from the field, defeated his exertions, and established the infidel in the city which bore, and still bears, the name of the first Christian Emperor.

(Chap. lxviii.)

Far different was the state of the Christians, who, with loud and impotent complaints, deplored the guilt or the punishment of their sins. The celestial image of the Virgin had been exposed in solemn procession; but their divine patroness was deaf to their entreaties: they accused the obstinancy of the Emperor for refusing a timely surrender, anticipated the horrors of their fate, and sighed for the repose and security of Turkish servitude. The noblest of the Greeks, and the bravest of the allies, were summoned to the palace, to prepare them, on the evening of the twenty-eighth for the duties and dangers of the general assault. The last speech of Palæologus was the funeral oration of the Roman Empire: he promised, he conjured, and he vainly attempted to infuse the hope which was extinguished in his own mind. In this world all was comfortless and gloomy; and neither the Gospel nor the Church have proposed any conspicuous recompense to the heroes who fall in the service of their country. But the example

of their prince, and the confinement of a siege, had armed these warriors with the courage of despair, and the pathetic scene is described by the feelings of the historian Phranza, who was himself present at this mournful assembly. They wept, they embraced; regardless of their families and fortunes, they devoted their lives; and each commander, departing to his station, maintained all night a vigilant and anxious watch on the rampart. The Emperor, and some faithful companions, entered the dome of St. Sophia, which in a few hours was to be converted into a mosque; and devoutly received, with tears and prayers, the sacrament of the Holy Communion. He reposed some moments in the palace, which resounded with cries and lamentations; solicited the pardon of all whom he might have injured; and mounted on horseback to visit the guards, and explore the motions of the enemy. The distress and fall of the last Constantine are more glorious than the long prosperity of the Byzantine Cæsars. . . . . .

At daybreak, without the customary signal of the morning gun, the Turks assaulted the city by sea and land; and the similitude of a twined or twisted thread has been applied to the closeness and continuity of their line of attack. The foremost ranks consisted of the refuse of the host, a voluntary crowd, who fought without order or command; of the feebleness of age or childhood, of peasants and vagrants, and of all who had joined the camp in the blind hope of plunder and martyrdom. The common impulse drove them onwards to the wall; the most audacious to climb were instantly precipitated; and not a dart, not a bullet, of the Christians was idly wasted on the accumulated throng. But their strength and ammunition were exhausted in this laborious defence; the ditch was filled with the bodies of the slain; they supported the footsteps of their companions; and of this devoted vanguard, the death was more serviceable than the life. Under their respective bashaws and sanjaks, the troops of Anatolia and Roumania were successively led to the charge: their progress was various and doubtful; but after a conflict of two hours, the Greeks still maintained and improved their advantage; and the voice of the Emperor was heard, encouraging his soldiers to achieve, by a last effort, the deliverance of their country. In that fatal moment the Janizaries arose, fresh, vigorous, and invincible. The Sultan himself, on horseback, with an iron mace in his hand, was the spectator and judge of their valour; he was surrounded by ten thousand of his domestic troops, whom he reserved for the decisive occasions; and the tide of battle was directed and impelled by his voice and eye. His numerous ministers of justice were posted behind the line, to urge, to restrain, and to punish; and if danger was in

the front, shame and inevitable death were in the rear of the fugitives. The cries of fear and of pain were drowned in the martial music of drums, trumpets, and attaballs; and experience has proved that the mechanical operation of sounds, by quickening the circulation of the blood and spirits, will act on the human machine more forcibly than the eloquence of reason and honour. From the lines, the gallies, and the bridge, the Ottoman artillery thundered on all sides; and the camp and city, the Greeks and the Turks, were involved in a cloud of smoke, which could only be dispelled by the final deliverance or destruction of the Roman Empire. The single combats of the heroes of history or fable amuse our fancy and engage our affections: the skilful evolutions of war may inform the mind, and improve a necessary though pernicious science. But in the uniform and odious pictures of a general assault, all is blood, and horror, and confusion; nor shall I strive, at the distance of three centuries and a thousand miles, to delineate a scene of which there could be no spectators, and of which the actors themselves were incapable of forming any just or adequate idea.

CHAPTER IX.

MACAULAY.

A.D. 1800–1859.

THE prose writer who has probably had more part than any other in influencing the taste and forming the style of the present generation is Lord Macaulay. He is remarkable also in another way, as the only literary man in our history who has won a place in the peerage by his pen. Not, perhaps, that the rank which he attained is wholly to be ascribed to the recognition of his literary services. His acquisition of it, was, no doubt, assisted by his position as a member of the House of Commons, who had even won himself a place in the Cabinet; but still his fame as a writer altogether overshadows any reputation which he may, for a time, have achieved among his own party, as a politician or a speaker; and, moreover, he had entirely ceased taking a prominent part in the debates of Parliament for some years before he was promoted to a peerage. In truth, he was not successful as a minister, and hardly more so as a debater: weighty matter was, no doubt, occasionally to be found in his speeches, choice language and pregnant expressions still more frequently; but it was the diction and style of an essayist rather than of an orator, while his delivery was monotonous and unimpressive to the last degree. It is as an author, as a historian and essayist alone, that he will be known to posterity, or indeed is already remembered; and it is in those characters only that we shall here speak of him.

He was the son of a Mr. Zachary Macaulay, well known in his generation as an earnest follower of Wilberforce in that excellent and able man's pursuit of the great object of his life, the Abolition of the Slave Trade. As a boy he had only the education of a private school; but he was

afterwards sent to Cambridge, where he distinguished himself highly by his classical proficiency, obtaining the second place in the classical tripos, the first being adjudged to that most profound and accurate scholar Mr. G. Long. And his attainments subsequently procured him a fellowship at Trinity College, the highest honour in the University. He then entered himself as a law student at Lincoln's Inn, and in due time was called to the bar; but he soon abandoned the profession of the law for literature, becoming early known as a contributor of most striking and brilliant essays to the 'Edinburgh Review.' His articles on Milton and Machiavelli made a great impression on the reading public; and already indicated the line which he would eventually take: since, though they were apparently literary, rather than historical subjects, it was on the historical aspect of the times in which the writers lived that he expatiated, far more than on their distinctive qualities as writers. And it was as a historical rather than as a literary critic that his turn of mind qualified him to excel. As one of the chief ornaments of the great Whig review, he naturally became known to the Whig leaders; and at the election of 1830, the interest of the Marquis of Lansdowne procured his return to the House of Commons as member for the borough of Calne. As such he supported the Reform Bill with great zeal; but, though he made one or two elaborate speeches in its support, and attained a subordinate office in the ministry as Secretary to the Board of Control, he evidently saw that any great parliamentary distinction was beyond his reach; and in 1834 he accepted an appointment in India as legal adviser to the Supreme Council, with the especial employment of reducing the body of Indian law into a formal code. In 1838 he returned to England, and in 1839 was appointed Secretary of War in Lord Melbourne's Government. But that minister was already tottering; and when, in 1841, he gave way to Sir Robert Peel, Macaulay found more congenial occupation in making preparations for a continuation of Hume's 'History of England.' On this arduous undertaking he worked with great diligence for five years; and though, in 1846, when Peel

was driven from the Government, the new Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, tempted him to return to ministerial office as Paymaster of the Forces, with a seat in the Cabinet, an honour which had rarely if ever been attached to that post before, he did not retain it long. He had been for some years representative of Edinburgh, but the bigotry of his constituents so deeply resented his vote in favour of Peel's statesmanlike measure for putting the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth on a more satisfactory footing, that, at the election of 1847, they deprived him of his seat, and he was thus left at leisure to devote his whole energies to the work on which he no doubt felt his fame would be most surely founded; for, though in 1852 the Edinburgh voters, repenting of their injustice and folly, again returned him to the House of Commons; and though in 1857 Lord Palmerston raised him to the peerage, during his latter years he scarcely ever took any share in the debates of either House of Parliament, and ended life as he had commenced it, as an author, dying, after a brief illness, in December 1859.

The first two volumes of his History were published in 1848, and, high as had been the expectations which had been formed of it, it was almost universally acknowledged that they were more than fulfilled. The second pair came out in 1856, and a small portion of the fifth volume was in such a state of forwardness at his death that his executors subsequently published that also. The four volumes which are all that can fairly be said to have been thoroughly finished comprise the history of only twelve years, and prove that his work had far exceeded the dimensions which he had assigned to it when he first undertook it. The first lines of the first chapter announce his intention of 'writing the History of England from the accession of King James II. down to a time within the memory of men still living': a phrase which manifestly implies a design of bringing it down at least to the beginning of the century: to the peace of Amiens, if not to the battle of Waterloo. Yet not one of these four volumes covers a longer space of time than four years; while so vast was the accumulation of materials from which they were compiled, that each volume occupied

four years in its composition. At the same rate the history of the next century would have occupied nearly forty volumes, and the whole lifetime of four authors, not only as industrious, but as skilful in arriving at sound deductions and conclusions as experience had rendered him. A more pregnant warning has never been given of the impossibility of calculating beforehand the degree in which a work will grow under the author's hand, the difficulty being increased instead of being diminished by his genius, by his keenness of observation, and his breadth of view. It is clear that the history, of which he has thus left us but a fragment, is by many times longer than he had originally designed to make it. But no one wishes it shorter. Like all other human productions, it has faults; faults both in manner and in matter; but still it is a work as attractive as it is important and useful. Two of its faults of manner, that is of style, seem in some degree inconsistent with each other. On the one hand there is a straining for effect by the continual employment of antithesis and contrast, which it is impossible not very often to look upon as forced and inappropriate. At other times a desire for perspicuity leads the author into inelegant repetition: as in this strange sentence, 'Even the wisest cannot, while it is still recent, weigh quite fairly the evils which it has caused against the evils which it has removed; for the evils which it has caused are felt, and the evils which it has removed are felt no longer.'[1] Such iteration seems almost like affectation, as if it arose from a resolution not to write like other people.

But in other respects it must be admitted that Lord Macaulay's general style is deserving of high admiration. It is not only invariably perspicuous and clear, but it is vivid and picturesque in a very eminent degree. Though not a poet, Lord Macaulay was not without a considerable portion of poetical fire. A volume of classical ballads which he entitled 'Lays of Ancient Rome,' and which reads almost like a translation from passages in Ovid's 'Fasti,' is instinct with an energy and animation not unlike that which inspired the authors of our old national ballads; and the spirit which dictated them he infused into his description of

[1] Vol. iii. p. 7.

many an event which afforded an opportunity for embellishment at once florid and vigorous, governing his inclination for such display with such judicious taste that, throughout his History and his later essays, I do not recollect one instance where his skill in what has been called word-painting seems misplaced or unwarranted.

I fear that his matter, that is to say his treatment of his subject, in the still more important points of impartiality and fairness, is hardly entitled to equal praise. He has himself given reasons why 'it is not surprising that those who have written concerning the limits of prerogative and liberty in the old polity of England should generally have shown the temper, not of judges, but of angry and uncandid advocates.'[1] And it is not surprising that one who took so keen an interest in the politics of the day as he did, should at times have allowed the zeal of the politician to overcome the equable moderation of the historian. But Lord Macaulay's faults in this respect seem to arise from a less excusable source: from a deliberate perversion or misunderstanding of the first duty of a historian when dealing with the characters of individuals. He guides his pen by a consideration not so much of the correctness of his narrative as of its effectiveness: of the impression it may produce on the minds or passions of his readers. And we have a right to call this his misconception of the historian's duty deliberate, because, in one of his earliest essays (one which, for the sagacity of its general observations, and for a correct appreciation of the writer whom he was criticising, and of his countrymen, of Machiavelli and the Italians of the 15th and 16th centuries, he rarely surpassed in any of his later productions), he formally disparages careful accuracy of narrative. He contrasts the classical histories, which he says 'may almost be called romances founded on fact,' with 'the fashion of later times;' Heroditus and Tacitus (one would fancy he meant to say Livy) with Davila and Clarendon. He admits that the latter 'give the more exact narrative.' 'It may be doubted,' he adds, 'whether more exact notions are conveyed to the reader. The best portraits are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature, and we are not certain that the best histories are not those in

[1] Vol. i. p. 27.

which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed: 'something is lost in accuracy, but much is gained in effect.' It does seem to me that this is not only an utterly mistaken view but also a most pernicious misapprehension of the duties of a historian, the very first of which unquestionably is to give a scrupulous, truthful, and uncoloured account of the transactions which he professes to relate. And, as if it were not enough to lay down so mischievous a maxim as a rule of composition, he carries it out in the most unfair way; for, if the licence of lending a little colour of exaggeration or invention could ever be justifiable, it must certainly be limited to general descriptions, to circumstances or events, if indeed such could be found, in which the character of individuals is not concerned. But the cases in which Macaulay especially gives the rein to his preference for such artist-like tricks are the deeds and reputations of particular persons. He determined to make one man the principal figure on his canvas; and as a painter might do, he not only portrayed him throughout in the most brilliant colours, dwelling with minute carefulness on every favorable incident in his career, and glossing over, often wholly suppressing every act or propensity of a different character, but he also blackened the surrounding figures for the mere purpose of making his chosen hero appear brighter by the contrast. It was not enough to praise the sagacity with which William III. wrought out the Revolution to which Britain owes so much of its subsequent prosperity, and the statesman-like skill and military hardihood with which he framed the League against Louis XIV., and, in spite of many a disappointment and discomfiture, stubbornly made head against his generals, till, at Ryswick, he won the recognition of his own position in England from the especial champion of the exiled James; to slur over and almost to conceal his weaknesses, his errors, and his crimes, his ungrateful and impolitic preference of the Dutch companions of his enterprise to those English nobles and statesmen whose support had alone made that enterprise successful; his preposterous liberality to these foreigners and other still more unworthy favourites, shown in grants so enormous that Parliament compelled the

revocation of many of them; his infidelity to his admirable wife, though it was to her position as the eldest daughter of the fugitive tyrant that he owed his elevation to the throne; his sanction and approval of the hideous massacre of Glencoe; unless, at the same time, Marlborough was blackened, his every act of political meanness and timeserving studiously brought into the light and dwelt upon with malicious exaggeration, in order to make William (the one hero whom, we are told by a high authority,[1] all Whigs must especially delight to honour) look the fairer by the contrast.

Still, in spite of this gravest of faults, so exquisite is the skill with which the writer connects his narrative, so brilliant the picturesqueness of his description, so varied the fertility of his illustration, so judicious the generality of his comments, even though rarely profound, and, it must be confessed, not always or altogether original, so acute his apprehension and so vivid his portraiture of the manners, feelings, and principles of the age which he describes, and of the different parties which influenced it, that we are, even against our calmer conviction, driven to forget the imperfections of his work; and linger over, and turn again and again to his narrative, feeling that, in a degree at least equal to any modern writer, he has rivalled the fame of the great classics, Herodotus and Livy, in their own field.

There is something of a poetical richness of fancy in the comparison with which the following extract opens, and which lends a glowing colour to the subsequent sentences, which display the patriot's pride in the solid greatness of our national character; the statesman's acknowledgment of the sterling value of our constitution to all classes alike; the scholar's appreciation of the richness of our language, unsurpassed by any modern tongue, and of the skill with which it has been employed by our long and varied train of writers of every class, among whom the author

[1] 'Indeed, a high regard for the memory of William III. may justly be reckoned one of the tests by which genuine Whiggism, as opposed both to Tory and republican principles, has always been recognised.'—Hallam, Const. Hist. iii. 200.

can hardly conceal his confidence that he was successfully asserting his right to no mean or unhonoured place.

(Vol. i. p. 17.)

The sources of the noblest rivers, which spread fertility over continents, and bear richly laden fleets to the sea, are to be sought in wild and barren mountain tracts, incorrectly laid down in maps, and rarely explored by travellers. To such a tract the history of our country during the thirteenth century may not unaptly be compared. Sterile and obscure as is that portion of our annals, it is there that we must seek for the origin of our freedom, our prosperity, and our glory. Then it was that the great English people was formed, that the national character began to exhibit those peculiarities which it has ever since retained, and that our fathers became emphatically islanders: islanders not merely in geographical position, but in their politics, their feelings, and their manners. Then first appeared with distinctness that constitution which has ever since, through all changes, preserved its identity; that constitution of which all the other free constitutions in the world are copies, and which, in spite of some defects, deserves to be regarded as the best under which any great society has ever yet existed during many ages. Then it was that the House of Commons, the archetype of all the representative assemblies which now meet, either in the old or in the new world, held its first sittings. Then it was that the common law rose to the dignity of a science, and rapidly became a not unworthy rival of the imperial jurisprudence. Then it was that the courage of those sailors who manned the rude barques of the Cinque Ports first made the flag of England terrible on the seas. Then it was that the most ancient colleges which still exist at both the great national seats of learning were founded. Then was formed that language, less musical indeed than the languages of the south, but in force, in richness, in aptitude for all the highest purposes of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator, inferior to the tongue of Greece alone. Then, too, appeared the first faint dawn of that noble literature, the most splendid and the most durable of the many glories of England.

A few pages later he points out, with acuteness sharpened by personal experience, how even the peculiar advantages of our constitution have a tendency to increase the difficulties of the historical student.

(P. 25.)

The historical literature of England has indeed suffered grievously from a circumstance which has not a little contributed to her pro-

sperity. The change, great as it is, which her polity has undergone during the last six centuries, has been the effect of gradual development, not of demolition and reconstruction. The present constitution of our country is, to the constitution under which she flourished five hundred years ago, what the tree is to the sapling, what the man is to the boy. The alteration has been great. Yet there never was a moment at which the chief part of what existed was not old. A polity thus formed must abound in anomalies. But for the evils arising from mere anomalies we have ample compensation. Other societies possess written constitutions more symmetrical. But no other society has yet succeeded in uniting revolution with prescription, progress with stability, the energy of youth with the majesty of immemorial antiquity.

This great blessing, however, has its drawbacks; and one of those drawbacks is, that every source of information as to our early history has been poisoned by party spirit. As there is no country where statesmen have been so much under the influence of the past, so there is no country where historians have been so much under the influence of the present. Between these two things, indeed, there is a natural connection. Where history is regarded merely as a picture of life and manners, or as a collection of experiments from which general maxims of civil wisdom may be drawn, a writer lies under no very pressing temptation to misrepresent transactions of ancient date. But where history is regarded as a repository of title-deeds, on which the rights of governments and nations depend, the motive to falsification becomes almost irresistible. A Frenchman is not now impelled by any strong interest either to exaggerate or to underrate the power of the kings of the house of Valois. The privileges of the States-General, of the States of Brittany, of the States of Burgundy, are now matters of as little practical importance as the constitution of the Jewish Sanhedrim, or of the Amphictyonic Council. The gulf of a great revolution completely separates the new from the old system. No such chasm divides the existence of the English nation into two distinct parts. Our laws and customs have never been lost in general and irreparable ruin. With us the precedents of the middle ages are still valid precedents, and are still cited on the gravest occasions, by the most eminent statesmen. Thus, when King George the Third was attacked by the malady which made him incapable of performing his regal functions, and when the most distinguished lawyers and politicians differed widely as to the course which ought, in such circumstances, to be pursued, the Houses of Parliament would not proceed to discuss any plan of regency till all the examples which were to be found in our annals, from the earliest times, had been

collected and arranged. Committees were appointed to examine the ancient records of the realm. The first precedent reported was that of the year 1217: much importance was attached to the precedents of 1326, of 1377, and of 1422; but the case which was justly considered as most in point was that of 1455. Thus in our country the dearest interests of parties have frequently been staked on the results of the researches of antiquaries. The inevitable consequence was, that our antiquaries conducted their researches in the spirit of partisans.

In his Essays, as well as in his History, Macaulay has evidently aimed at the fame of a vivid delineator of character. And his portrait of the Lord Halifax of Charles II.'s reign, which he seems to have laboured with a peculiar fondness, shows that he was well qualified to attain his object by a great nicety of observation and discrimination, and by an appreciation of good or great qualities of the most varied kind, which rarely failed him.

(P. 243.)

Among the statesmen of that age Halifax was, in genius, the first. His intellect was fertile, subtle, and capacious. His polished, luminous, and animated eloquence, set off by the silver tones of his voice, was the delight of the House of Lords. His conversation overflowed with thought, fancy, and wit. His political tracts well deserve to be studied for their literary merit, and fully entitle him to a place among the English classics. To the weight derived from talents so great and various, he united all the influence which belongs to rank and ample possessions. Yet he was less successful in politics than many who enjoyed smaller advantages. Indeed, those intellectual peculiarities which make his writings valuable frequently impeded him in the contests of active life. For he always saw passing events, not in the point of view in which they commonly appear to one who bears a part in them, but in the point of view in which, after the lapse of many years, they appear to the philosophic historian. With such a turn of mind, he could not long continue to act cordially with any body of men. All the prejudices, all the exaggerations of both the great parties in the State moved his scorn. He despised the mean arts and unreasonable clamours of demagogues. He despised still more the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience. He sneered impartially at the bigotry of the Churchman and at the bigotry of the Puritan. He was equally unable to comprehend how any man should object to saints'-days and surplices, and how any man should persecute any other man for objecting to them. In temper he was what, in

our time, is called a Conservative. In theory he was a Republican. Even when his dread of anarchy and his disdain for vulgar delusions led him to side for a time with the defenders of arbitrary power, his intellect was always with Locke and Milton. Indeed, his jests upon hereditary monarchy were sometimes such as would have better become a member of the Calf's Head Club, than a Privy Councillor of the Stuarts. In religion he was so far from being a zealot, that he was called by the uncharitable an atheist; but this imputation he vehemently repelled; and in truth, though he sometimes gave scandal, by the way in which he exerted his rare powers both of argumentation and of ridicule on serious subjects, he seems to have been by no means insusceptible of religious impressions.

He was the chief of those politicians whom the two great parties contemptuously called Trimmers. Instead of quarrelling with this nickname, he assumed it as a title of honour, and vindicated with great vivacity the dignity of the appellation. Everything good, he said, trims between extremes. The temperate zone trims between the climate in which men are roasted and the climate in which they are frozen. The English Church trims between the Anabaptist madness and the Papist lethargy. The English constitution trims between Turkish despotism and Polish anarchy. Virtue is nothing but a just temper between propensities any one of which, if indulged to excess, becomes vice. Nay, the perfection of the Supreme Being himself consists in the exact equilibrium of attributes none of which could preponderate without disturbing the whole moral and physical order of the world. Thus Halifax was a Trimmer on principle. He was also a Trimmer by the constitution both of his head and of his heart. His understanding was keen, sceptical, inexhaustibly fertile in distinctions and objections; his taste refined; his sense of the ludicrous exquisite; his temper placid and forgiving, but fastidious, and by no means prone either to malevolence or to enthusiastic admiration. Such a man could not long be constant to any band of political allies. He must not, however, be confounded with the vulgar crowd of renegades. For though, like them, he passed from side to side, his transition was always in the direction opposite to theirs. He had nothing in common with those who fly from extreme to extreme, and who regard the party which they have deserted with an animosity far exceeding that of consistent enemies. His place was between the hostile divisions of the community, and he never wandered far beyond the frontier of either. The party to which he at any moment belonged was the party which, at that moment, he liked least, because it was the party of which at that

moment he had the nearest view. He was, therefore, always severe upon his violent associates, and was always in friendly relations with his moderate opponents. Every faction, in the day of its insolent and vindictive triumph, incurred his censure; and every faction, when vanquished and persecuted, found in him a protector. To his lasting honour it must be mentioned that he attempted to save those victims whose fate has left the deepest stain both on the Whig and on the Tory name.

Of all his efforts at brilliant description, few, if any, surpass in animation his picture of the relief of Derry.

(Vol. iii. p. 235.)

It was the twenty-eighth of July. The sun had just set; the evening sermon in the cathedral was over, and the heart-broken congregation had separated, when the sentinels on the tower saw the sails of three vessels coming up the Foyle. Soon there was a stir in the Irish camp. The besiegers were on the alert for miles along both shores. The ships were in extreme peril, for the river was low, and the only navigable channel ran very near to the left bank, where the head-quarters of the enemy had been fixed, and where the batteries were most numerous. Leake performed his duty with a skill and spirit worthy of his noble profession, exposed his frigate to cover the merchantmen, and used his guns with great effect. At length the little squadron came to the place of peril. Then the 'Mountjoy' took the lead, and went right at the boom. The huge barricade cracked and gave way; but the shock was such that the 'Mountjoy' rebounded, and stuck in the mud. A yell of triumph rose from the banks, the Irish rushed to their boats, and were preparing to board; but the 'Dartmouth' poured on them a well-directed broadside, which threw them into disorder. Just then the 'Phœnix' dashed at the breach which the 'Mountjoy' had made, and was in a moment within the fence. Meantime the tide was rising fast. The 'Mountjoy' began to move, and soon passed safe through the broken stakes and floating spars. But her brave master was no more. A shot from one of the batteries had struck him; and he died by the most enviable of all deaths, in sight of the city which was his birthplace, which was his home, and which had just been saved by his courage and self-devotion, from the most frightful form of destruction. The night had closed in before the conflict at the boom began; but the flash of the guns was seen, and the noise heard, by the lean and ghastly multitude which covered the walls of the city. When the 'Mountjoy' grounded, and when the shout of triumph rose from the Irish on both sides of the river, the hearts of the besieged died within them. One

who endured the unutterable anguish of that moment has told us that they looked fearfully livid in each other's eyes. Even after the barricade had been passed, there was a terrible half-hour of suspense. It was ten o'clock before the ships arrived at the quay. The whole population was there to welcome them. A screen made of casks filled with earth was hastily thrown up to protect the landing-place from the batteries on the other side of the river; and then the work of unloading began. First were rolled on shore barrels containing six thousand bushels of meal. Then came great cheeses, casks of beef, flitches of bacon, kegs of butter, sacks of peas and biscuit, ankers of brandy. Not many hours before, half a pound of tallow and three-quarters of a pound of salted hide had been weighed out with niggardly care to every fighting man. The ration which each now received was three pounds of flour, two pounds of beef, and a pint of peas. It is easy to imagine with what tears grace was said over the suppers of that evening. There was little sleep on either side of the wall. The bonfires shone bright along the whole circuit of the ramparts. The Irish guns continued to roar all night; and all night the bells of the rescued city made answer to the Irish guns with a peal of joyful defiance. Through the three following days the batteries of the enemy continued to play. But, on the third night, flames were seen arising from the camp; and when the first of August dawned, a line of smoking ruins marked the site lately occupied by the huts of the besiegers; and the citizens saw far off the long column of pikes and standards retreating up the left bank of the Foyle towards Strabane.

PRESCOTT.

A.D. 1796–1859.

FAR from unimportant have been the contributions which, of late years, writers of the United States have made to our historical literature; their efforts being the more valuable inasmuch as they have been chiefly exerted over a field but little known to English authors, the affairs of Spain and her vast dependencies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The most eminent of them was William Hickling Prescott, who was born in a town called Salem, in Massachusetts, in 1796. While a very young man, he met with an accident which threatened at first to destroy his eyesight, and which did in fact greatly impair it; but in spite of this calamity, he adhered to a plan which he had

previously formed of addicting himself wholly to literature and authorship; not for the sake of a livelihood, for he was possessed of an independent fortune; but from a thirst after knowledge which has been often found to overcome all difficulties, but which has rarely had more serious obstacles to contend with than in his case. He chose a great subject, the reign of the Catholic Sovereigns whose marriage united the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, and thus consolidated Spain under one compact government; but he had hardly commenced the necessary studies when his eyes wholly failed him; and he was forced for years to rely wholly on the aid of a secretary who was often unacquainted with the language of the books and documents which he was reading. Fortunately, before his work was completed, his eyes regained sufficient strength to allow him to revise what he had written; and in 1838 the 'History of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella' was published. It at once established his reputation in the very first rank of living historians. He had chosen his subject with great judgment; since, besides the great importance of many of the events which it comprised: the union of the Spanish crowns, the expulsion of the Infidels from the Peninsula, the discovery of America, and wars in Italy, it had for the British reader all the charm of novelty, as, with the exception of Robertson's narrative of the exploits of Columbus, the transactions which he related had scarcely been touched upon by any writer in the language. And his treatment of them was worthy of their importance. He had not indeed the dignity of Gibbon, nor did he equal the penetration and depth of Hume; but his style was easy, flowing, and pure in expression; his descriptions were vivid and picturesque, his delineations of character discriminating; and the whole work was animated by a general soundness of judgment and correctness of feeling.

It might seem that the enterprises of Columbus were the events of the reign which had taken the strongest hold of his fancy; since his next labours were devoted to a detail of the exploits of the most successful of the adventurers who rendered the achievements of the great admiral really profitable to Spain; of Cortez, who conquered Mexico, and

Pizarro, who founded the empire of Peru. These two works fully maintained his reputation, if indeed the narrative of the 'Conquest of Mexico' did not augment it; and, having completed them, he returned to the History of Spain in Europe. Of the reign of Charles V. who succeeded Ferdinand, Robertson had left little to be said, and Prescott confined his labours to an edition of his great work, with the addition of a chapter or two which describe the life of Charles after his abdication with a precision and fulness for which the documents which alone were accessible to the elder historian did not afford materials. But the history of Philip II., the sovereign whose reign was even more important than that of Charles in its bearing on the subsequent history of Europe, did not appear to him to have been treated by any previous writer with such knowledge and skill as barred that subject against other aspirants. And accordingly he at once applied himself to it; judging perhaps that to an English reader the reign in which the Armada was destroyed, and the foundation laid of the Commonwealth which sent forth William of Orange to defend and preserve the constitution of their country, would be especially interesting. But he was not permitted to complete the work. Like many others, it grew under his hands to a size beyond that on which, in all likelihood, he had originally calculated; three volumes only covered seventeen years, and he had but just arrived at the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Lepanto, when a sudden attack of paralysis carried him off in the first month of 1859. The third book contains an account of the earlier years of Alva's administration in the Netherlands, which drove those provinces into rebellion, and thus laid the seeds of that decay which rapidly reduced Spain to the insignificant position which she has ever since held. And his narrative of this part of the subject may be said to have been continued by a countryman of his own, who, if he be not quite so skilled in the graces of composition, yet brought to his task equal industry, candour, and love of truth; but of whom, as he is still living, the plan of this work forbids us to say more.

The first of the subjoined extracts presents a very favorable specimen of our historian's style when he seeks to

enliven his narrative by the introduction of picturesque incidents, while the transaction which it relates is also worthy of particular mark, as characteristic of the times when, as was especially the case in Spain, the spirit of ancient chivalry still lingered in the breasts of the knights, diversifying and softening the horrors of war.

(Ferdinand and Isabella, vol. ii., chap. xi.)

The war now began to assume many of the romantic features of that of Granada. The knights on both sides, not content with the usual military rencontres, defied one another to jousts and tourneys, eager to establish their prowess in the noble exercises of chivalry. One of the most remarkable of these meetings took place between eleven Spanish and as many French knights, in consequence of some disparaging remarks of the latter on the cavalry of their enemies, which they affirmed inferior to their own. The Venetians gave the parties a fair field of combat in the neutral territory under their own walls of Irani. A gallant array of well-armed knights of both nations guarded the lists, and maintained the order of the fight. On the appointed day (September 20, 1502) the champions appeared in the field, armed at all points, with horses richly caparisoned and barbed or covered with steel panoply like their masters. The roofs and battlements of Irani were covered with spectators, while the lists were thronged with the French and Spanish chivalry, each staking in some degree the national honour on the issue of the contest. Among the Castilians were Diego de Paredes and Diego de Vera, while the good knight Bayard was most conspicuous on the other side.

As the trumpets sounded the appointed signal, the hostile parties rushed to the encounter. Three Spaniards were borne from their saddles by the rudeness of the shock, and four of their antagonists' horses slain. The fight, which began at ten in the morning, was not to be protracted beyond sunset. Long before that hour all the French, save two, one of them the chevalier Bayard, had been dismounted, and their horses, at which the Spaniards had aimed more than at the riders, disabled or slain. The Spaniards, seven of whom were still on horseback, pressed hard on their adversaries, leaving little doubt of the fortune of the day. The latter, however, intrenching themselves behind the carcases of their dead horses, made good their defence against the Spaniards, who in vain tried to spur their terrified steeds over the barrier. In this way the fight was protracted till sunset; and, as both parties continued to keep possession of the field, the palm of victory was

adjudged to neither, while both were pronounced to have demeaned themselves like good and valiant knights.

The tourney being ended, the combatants met in the centre of the lists, and embraced each other in the true companionship of chivalry, 'making good cheer together,' says an old chronicler, before they separated. The Great Captain was not satisfied with the issue of the fight. 'We have at least,' said one of his champions, 'disproved the taunt of the Frenchmen, and shown ourselves as good horsemen as they.' 'I sent you for better,' coldly retorted Gonsalvo.

A more tragic termination befel a combat *à l'outrance* between the chevalier Bayard and a Spanish cavalier, named Alonso de Sotomayor, who had accused the former of uncourteous treatment of him while his prisoner. Bayard denied the charge, and defied the Spaniard to prove it in single fight, on horse or on foot, as he best liked. Sotomayor, aware of his antagonist's uncommon horsemanship, preferred the latter alternative.

At the day and hour appointed (February 2, 1503), the two knights entered the lists, armed with sword and dagger, and sheathed in complete harness; although, with a degree of temerity unusual in these combats, they wore their visors up. Both combatants knelt down in silent prayer, for a few moments, and then rising and crossing themselves, advanced straight against each other; 'the good knight Bayard,' says Brantome, 'moving as light of step as if he were going to lead some fair lady down the dance.'

The Spaniard was of a large and powerful frame, and endeavoured to crush his enemy by weight of blows, or to close with him and bring him to the ground. The latter, naturally inferior in strength, was rendered still weaker by a fever, from which he had not entirely recovered. He was more light and agile than his adversary, however; and superior dexterity enabled him not only to parry his enemy's strokes, but to deal him occasionally one of his own, while he sorely distressed him by the rapidity of his movements. At length, as the Spaniard was somewhat thrown off his balance by an ill-directed blow, Bayard struck him so sharply on the gorget that it gave way, and the sword entered his throat. Furious with the agony of the wound, Sotomayor collected all his strength for a last struggle; and, grasping his antagonist in his arms, they both rolled in the dust together. Before either could extricate himself, the quick-eyed Bayard, who had retained his poniard in his left hand during the whole combat, while the Spaniard's had remained in his belt, drove the steel with such convulsive strength under his enemy's eye, that it

pierced quite through the brain. After the judges had awarded the honours of the day to Bayard, the minstrels, as usual, began to pour forth triumphant strains in praise of the victor; but the good knight commanded them to desist, and having first prostrated himself on his knees, in gratitude for his victory, walked slowly out of the lists, expressing a wish that the combat had had a different termination, so that his honour had been saved.

His skill as a delineator of character is shown in the following passage, which sums up the great qualities which distinguished one who was, as he deserved to be, among his favourite heroes.

(Conquest of Mexico, chap. v.)

The personal history of Cortés has been so minutely detailed in the preceding narrative, that it will be only necessary to touch on the more prominent features of his character. Indeed the history of the conquest, as I have already had occasion to remark, is necessarily that of Cortés, who is, if I may so say, not merely the soul, but the body, of the enterprise, present everywhere in person, in the thick of the fight, or in the building of the works, with his sword or with his musket, sometimes leading his soldiers, and sometimes directing his little navy. The negotiations, intrigues, correspondence, are all conducted by him; and, like Cæsar, he wrote his own commentaries in the heat of the stirring scenes which form the subject of them. His character is marked with the most opposite traits, embracing qualities apparently the most incompatible. He was avaricious, yet liberal; bold to desperation, yet cautious and calculating in his plans; magnanimous, yet very cunning; courteous and affable in his deportment, yet inexorably stern; lax in his notions of morality, yet (not uncommon) a sad bigot. The great feature in his character was constancy of purpose: a constancy not to be daunted by danger, nor baffled by disappointment, nor wearied out by impediments and delays.

He was a knight-errant in the literal sense of the word. Of all the band of adventurous cavaliers whom Spain, in the sixteenth century, sent forth on the career of discovery and conquest, there was none more deeply filled with the spirit of romantic enterprise than Hernando Cortés. Dangers and difficulties, instead of deterring, seemed to have a charm in his eyes. They were necessary to rouse him to a full consciousness of his powers. He grappled with them at the outset, and, if I may so express myself, seemed to prefer to take his enterprises by the most difficult side. He conceived, at the first moment of his landing in Mexico, the design of its conquest. When he saw the strength of its

civilization, he was not turned from his purpose. When he was assailed by the superior force of Narvaez, he still persisted in it; and, when he was driven in ruin from the capital, he still cherished his original idea. How successfully he carried it into execution we have seen; after the few years of repose which succeeded the Conquest, his adventurous spirit impelled him to that dreary march across the marches of Chiapa; and, after another interval, to seek his fortunes on the stormy Californian Gulf. When he found that no other continent remained for him to conquer, he made serious proposals to the Emperor to equip a fleet at his own expense, with which he would sail to the Moluccas, and subdue the Spice-Islands for the Crown of Castile.

This spirit of knight-errantry might lead us to undervalue his talents as a general, and to regard him merely in the light of a lucky adventurer. But this would be doing him injustice; for Cortés was certainly a great general, if that man be one who performs great achievements with the resources which his own genius has created. There is probably no instance in history where so vast an enterprise has been achieved by means apparently so inadequate. He may be truly said to have effected the conquest by his own resources. If he was indebted for his success to the co-operation of the Indian tribes, it was the force of his genius that obtained command of such materials. He arrested the arm that was lifted to smite him, and made it do battle in his behalf. He beat the Tlascalans, and made them his staunch allies. He beat the soldiers of Narvaez, and doubled his effective force by it. When his own men deserted him, he did not desert himself. He drew them back by degrees, and compelled them to act by his will, till they were all as one man. He brought together the most miscellaneous collection of mercenaries who ever fought under one standard: adventurers from Cuba and the isles, craving for gold; hidalgos, who came from the old country to win laurels; broken-down cavaliers, who hoped to mend their fortunes in the New World; vagabonds flying from justice; the grasping followers of Narvaez, and his own reckless veterans;—men with hardly a common tie, and burning with the spirit of jealousy and faction: wild tribes of the natives from all parts of the country, who had been sworn enemies from their cradles, and who had met only to cut one another's throats, and to procure victims for sacrifice;—men, in short, differing in race, in language, and in interests, with scarcely anything in common among them. Yet this motley congregation was assembled in one camp, compelled to bend to the will of one man, to consort together in harmony, to breathe, as it were, one spirit, and to move on a common principle of action! It

is in this wonderful power over the discordant masses thus gathered under his banner, that we recognise the genius of the great commander, no less than in the skill of his military operations. . . . . .

His character has been unconsciously traced by the hand of a master.

'And oft the chieftain deigned to aid
And mingle in the mirth they made;
For though, with men of high degree,
The proudest of the proud was he,
Yet, trained in camps, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart.
They love a captain to obey,
Boisterous as March, yet fresh as May;
With open hand, and brow as free,
Lover of wine and minstrelsy;
Ever the first to scale a tower,
As venturous in a lady's bower;—
Such buxom chief shall lead his host
From India's fires to Zembla's frost.'

Cortés, without much violence, might have sat for this portrait of Marmion.

Cortés was not a vulgar conqueror. He did not conquer from the mere ambition of conquest. If he destroyed the ancient capital of the Aztecs, it was to build up a more magnificent capital on its ruins. If he desolated the land, and broke up its existing institutions, he employed the short period of his administration in digesting schemes for introducing there a more improved culture and a higher civilization. In all his expeditions he was careful to study the resources of the country, its social organization, and its physical capacities. He enjoined it on his captains to attend particularly to these objects. If he was greedy of gold, like most of the Spanish cavaliers in the New World, it was not to hoard it, nor merely to lavish it in the support of a princely establishment, but to secure funds for prosecuting his glorious discoveries. Witness his costly expeditions to the Gulf of California. His enterprises were not undertaken solely for mercenary objects; as is shown by the various expeditions he set on foot for the discovery of a communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific. In his schemes for ambition he showed a respect for the interests of science, to be referred partly to the natural superiority of his mind, but partly, no doubt, to the influence of early education. It is, indeed, hardly possible that a person of his wayward and mercurial temper should have improved his advantages at the

University; but he brought away from it a tincture of scholarship, seldom found among the cavaliers of the period, and which had its influence in enlarging his own conceptions. His celebrated letters are written with a simple elegance that, as I have already had occasion to remark, have caused them to be compared to the military narrative of Cæsar. It will not be easy to find in the chronicles of the period a more concise yet comprehensive statement, not only of the events of his campaign, but of the circumstances most worthy of notice in the character of the conquered countries.

CHAPTER X.

MILMAN.

A.D. 1790–1868.

Not unconnected with portions of the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' is the 'History of Latin Christianity' by the late Dean of St. Paul's, which necessarily travels over part of the same ground which, to less enquiring and less courageous minds, might have seemed to have been too completely made his own by Gibbon for any subsequent writer to approach the subject; but the Dean had published an edition of Gibbon's work, and it was very probably the preparation for that task which suggested to him the idea of becoming himself the narrator of events which had no slight influence on the fortunes of the Roman Empire in its latter days; but to describe which with the minuteness which those interested above all things in the progress of religion would desire, was beside Gibbon's plan, and even, from his unhappy scepticism, beyond his powers.

Henry Hart Milman, the youngest son of a physician of eminence, Sir Francis Milman, was one of those men who, having given extraordinary promise of excellence during their career at Eton and at Oxford, are only excited by their early success to labour to keep up their reputation, and who are so richly endowed by nature that every succeeding year of study tends further to develop and mature their abilities. At Eton he was a very distinguished boy. At Oxford the number of prizes which he carried off was great almost beyond all previous example; and, what is not very common, indicated the possession of apparently equal powers in both prose and poetical composition, since he obtained medals for both, in English and Latin. Greek composition strange to say, was in his day, and for long

afterwards, wholly neglected in that which boasted to be the *classical* University; though at Cambridge the medals for a Greek ode had long been among the most coveted prizes; and, while Milman was an undergraduate at Oxford, the Cambridge authorities established the Porson prize.

His first public ventures as an author were, however, not of the kind to which he owes his present, and will owe his future, fame. They were confined to poetry, chiefly to dramatic poetry. His first play, called 'Fazio,' was acted at Bath and in London with no inconsiderable success, and is still occasionally represented; but those which followed were not calculated for the stage, being dramas on religious subjects; on the fall of Jerusalem; on Belshazzar; on the Martyr of Antioch. It is well known what a storm was raised in Scotland when a Presbyterian minister wrote 'Douglas.' And though the same narrow-mindedness is not very common in English congregations, yet it is recorded that some of the good people of Reading (of which Milman had been appointed Vicar) were inclined to be scandalised at their spiritual guide thus coming forward as a supporter of the theatre, though it appeared that the production of 'Fazio' on the stage was not in accordance with the author's original intention, and hardly with his wish. But it was received with no disapproval by his university, which lost no opportunity of conferring distinctions on him. He was appointed Professor of Poetry in 1821, and Bampton Lecturer in 1827. And shortly after receiving this last appointment he made his first appearance as a prose writer. He had indeed been for some years a contributor to the 'Quarterly Review,' but no prose work of mark had appeared with his name, when in 1829 he published a History of the Jews. It was severely attacked in some quarters, as handling historical facts with a freedom which, to nervous people, seemed tainted with the spirit of German rationalism; but a continued study of the subject only confirmed Milman in his original views; and when, twenty-five years later, he published a revised edition of the work, with little or no alteration of the passages which had been most objected to, the objections were not repeated. Meantime he had commenced what may be looked on as a continuation of that work, the

History of Christianity, publishing in 1840 'The History of Christianity to the Extinction of Paganism in the Roman Empire,' and completing it fifteen years later by 'The History of Latin Christianity, including that of the Popes to the Pontificate of Nicholas V.,' the Prelate so splendidly eulogised by Gibbon, in whose reign the victorious Mahomet expelled the cross from the eastern regions of the Empire.

The 'History of Latin Christianity' is the work on which Milman's fame rests. It does not display equal mastery of language with the 'Decline and Fall'; nor was the author gifted with the same philosophical penetration, nor with equal power of combining complicated details into one harmonious and picturesque narrative, with the writer of that immortal work. But he had what Gibbon wanted, a sincere feeling of the vast importance of the subject; a resolute candour which made him desirous to do justice to all whose views and differences of opinion his narrative led him to notice; and he added to these qualities a rich store of varied learning, which qualified him to form, and which gave weight to, the judgments which he calmly but resolutely expressed. The great merit of the work was promptly and universally acknowledged, and is sufficiently attested by the fact that its bulk (it consists of six large volumes) did not prevent its rapidly going through four editions in a very few years.

His services to the cause of learning and religion were not unrecognised by those who have the distribution of the ecclesiastical patronage of the Crown. And it is remarkable, as a tribute to his reputation for general fairness and moderation, that in each instance his promotion came from the party to which he was politically opposed. In 1835 one Whig prime minister, Lord Melbourne, gave him a canonry at Westminster, with the vicarage of St. Margaret's. In 1850 another Whig, Lord John Russell, promoted him to the Deanery of St. Paul's. And in that easy and honourable retirement which no man had better earned, he passed the last eighteen years of his life, not even in his old age resting from his labours, for death found him engaged on the annals of the cathedral over which he presided, and which were almost ready for publication.

That he should have been occupied on a work necessarily involving such a vast amount of research and labour is a sufficient proof that he was still enjoying the full possession of his rich mental endowments, when in August 1868 he was suddenly attacked by paralysis, to which before the end of the next month he yielded; leaving behind him a reputation of the first class, in an age which has rarely been equalled for the number or the value of its contributions to historical learning.

The account of St. Benedict is a very favorable specimen of the author's style.

(History of Latin Christianity, book iii. chap. vi.).

History, to be true, must condescend to speak the language of legend; the belief of the times is part of the record of the times; and though there may occur what may baffle its more calm and searching philosophy, it must not disdain that which was the primal, almost universal, motive of human life.

Benedict was born at Nursia, in the province of Spoleto, of respectable parents. He was sent to Rome, according to still-prevailing custom, to be instructed in the liberal arts. But his pure spirit shrunk instinctively from the vices of the capital. He gave up the perilous study of letters, and preferred a holy ignorance. He fled secretly from the society of his dangerous associates, from the house of his parents, who, it seems, had accompanied him, as of old the father of Horace his son, to Rome. His faithful nurse alone discovered his design, and accompanied his flight. This incident seems to imply that his flight took place at a very tender age; a circumstance, told at a later period, intimates that it was not before the first impulses of youthful passion. He took refuge in a small village called Effide, about two miles from Subiaco. The rustic inhabitants, pleased with his modesty and sweetness of disposition, allowed him to inhabit a cell near their church. Here took place his first miracle. The faithful nurse, Cyrilla, had borrowed a stone sieve, commonly used in that part of the country to make bread. It fell from her hands, and broke in two. Benedict, moved by her distress, united the two pieces, prayed over them, and the vessel became whole. The wondering rustics are said to have hung the miraculously restored sieve over the church door. But the sensitive youth shrunk from fame, as he had from vice: he sought a deeper solitude. In the neighbourhood of Subiaco, by the advice and assistance of a monk, named Romanus, he found a wild and inaccessible cavern, into which he

crept, and for three years the softly and delicately educated boy lay hid in this cold and dismal dwelling from the sight of men. His scanty food was supplied by Romanus, who took it by stealth from his own small pittance in his monastery. The cave was at the foot of the hill on which the monastery stood, but there was no path down the precipitous rock. The food, therefore, was let down by a rope, and a small bell tied to the rope gave notice of its coming. Once the devil broke the rope, but he could not baffle the inventive charity of Romanus. To an imagination so prepared, what scene could be more suited to nurture the disposition to wonders and visions than the wild and romantic region about Subiaco. The cave of Benedict is still shown as a hallowed place, high on the crest of a toppling rock, with the Anio roaring beneath in a deep ravine, clothed with the densest forest, and looking on a another wild precipitous crag. Half-way up the zigzag and laborious path stands the convent of Benedict's sister, St. Scolastica. So entirely was Benedict cut off from the world that he ceased to mark not merely the progress of ordinary time, but even the fasts and festivals of the Church. A certain priest had prepared for himself some food of unusual delicacy for the festival of Easter. A mysterious admonition within his heart reproved him for this luxurious indulgence while the servant of God was pining with hunger. Who he was, this holy and heaven-designated servant, or where he dwelt, the priest knew not, but he was led through the tangled thickets and over the rugged rocks to the cave of Benedict. Benedict was ignorant that it was Easter, and not till he was assured that it was that festal day would he share in the heaven-sent banquet.

The secret of his hiding-place was thus betrayed, and some of the rude shepherds of the country, seeing the hermit in his coarse attire, which was no more than a sheepskin thrown round him, mistook him at first for a wild beast; but when they approached him, they were so melted by his gentle eloquence that their hearts yielded at once, and they were subdued to courtesy of manners and Christian belief. But the young hermit had not escaped the notice or the jealousy of the enemy of mankind. One day (we must not omit puerilities so characteristic, and this is gravely related by a late serious and learned writer) he appeared in the shape of a blackbird, and flapped him over the eyes with his wings, so as almost to blind him. The evil one took a more dangerous form, the unforgotten image of a beautiful woman, whom young Benedict had known at Rome (he could not, then, have left it so very young). This was a perilous probation, and it was only by rushing forth, and rolling his naked body upon the

brambles and sharp points of the rocks, that Benedict obtained the hard-wrung victory. Never after this, as he said to his familiar friends, was he exposed to these fleshly trials. Yet his warfare was not over. He had triumphed over sensual lust: he was to be tempted by religious ambition. A convent of monks in the neighbourhood, excited by the fame of his sanctity, determined to choose Benedict for their head. He fairly warned them of the rigorous and uncompromising discipline which he should think it his duty to enforce. Either fondly believing their own sincerity, or presuming on the latent gentleness of Benedict, they could not be dissuaded from the design. But in a short time the firm severity of the young abbot roused their fierce resentment; hatred succeeded to reverence and love. They attempted to poison him; but the cup with the guilty potion burst asunder in the hands of Benedict, who calmly reproved them for their crime, prayed for the divine forgiveness, reminded them of his own warnings, before he undertook their government, and withdrew into his happier solitude.

It was no longer a solitude. The sanctity of Benedict, and the fame of his miracles, drew together daily fresh aspirants to the holiness or the quietness of his recluse life. In a short time arose in the poetic district on the peaks and rent cliffs, under the oaks and chestnuts round Subiaco, twelve monasteries, each containing twelve votaries (Benedict considered that less or more than this number led to negligence or to discord). The names of many of these cloisters designate their romantic sites: the Monastery of the Cavern; St. Angelo and St. Clement by the Lake; St. John by the Stream; St. Victor at the foot of the Mountain; Eternal Life, or the Holy Valley; and one now called Santa Scolastica, rising amid embowering woods on a far-seen ridge of the Apennines. The fame of these institutions soon spread to Rome. Some of the nobles joined the young fraternities, others sent their sons for the benefit of a severe and religious education; and already considerable endowments, in farms and other possessions, were bestowed by the piety and gratitude of parents or admirers. . . . . .

Three virtues constituted the sum of the Benedictine discipline: silence, with solitude and seclusion; humility; obedience, which, in the strong language of its laws, extended to impossibilities. All is thus concentrated on self. It was the man isolated from his kind who was to rise to a lonely perfection. All the social, all patriotic virtues were excluded, the mere mechanic observance of the rules of brotherhood, or even the corporate spirit, are hardly worthy of notice, though they are the only substitutes for the rejected and proscribed pursuits of active life.

The three occupations of life were the worship of God, reading, and manual labour. The adventitious advantages, and great they were, of these industrious agricultural settlements, were not contemplated by the founder; the object of the monks was not to make the wilderness blossom with fertility, to extend the arts and husbandry of civilised life into barbarous regions; it was solely to employ in engrossing occupation that portion of time which could not be devoted to worship and to study.

9

ALISON.

A.D. 1795–1860.

If the importance of a subject, and unwearied industry proceeding from and constantly animated by an honest desire to do justice to everyone of whom he speaks, could entitle a writer to be ranked among historians of the first class, a very high place could not be refused to Sir Archibald Alison. He has told us that, being in Paris at the time of the triumphant entry of the allied sovereigns into that capital, he, though then little more than a boy, conceived the idea of writing the history of the great and awful event which had led to that triumph, the first French Revolution. The idea, however vague at first, speedily ripened into a fixed resolution to carry it out. And he took extraordinary pains to qualify himself for so arduous an undertaking. He travelled over the greater part of Europe to make a personal inspection of the scenes of the chief events, and of the fields of the principal battles. He examined almost every publication of every kind, newspapers, despatches, memoirs, speeches, which threw or pretended to throw any light upon the different transactions which he proposed to relate; and at length, after twenty-five years of incessant labour, he published the first volumes of his work, which he entitled 'The History of Europe from the commencement of the French Revolution to the restoration of the Bourbons.' It originally consisted of ten volumes, which were subsequently expanded to fourteen; the last volumes appearing in 1846; and he followed them with a second series, in eight volumes, carrying the story

down to the establishment of the Second Empire in 1852. This second series is universally admitted to be a failure as a composition; though it is not without its value as an honest record of events. On the merits of the first series opinions have greatly differed; and perhaps it neither deserves the excessive praise which it has received in some quarters, nor the contempt which has been expressed for it in others. To judge it fairly we should separate the author's narrative of facts from his expression of his own opinions. With respect to the former, his industry put him in possession of the truth concerning the most important events, as far as it was attainable by study and research. His honesty prevented his ever wilfully distorting a fact or misrepresenting an individual. But his opinions can very rarely be pronounced valuable; his criticisms on military operations do not usually command the assent of competent judges; while his judgments on statesmen and their measures are coloured by his peculiar views of political economy: he seems equally fond of truisms and of fallacies.

As a judge and painter of character, he falls far short of every one of the other writers whose works we have been examining. No man ever showed himself less capable of distinguishing sterling metal from its spurious imitation, or pretentious inanity from moral or intellectual greatness. His style is very unequal; at times, especially in the relation of exploits of personal gallantry, it is spirited and vigorous, though too often needlessly prolix. But in the discussion of political questions, it is often pompous and turgid; his sentences become involved and unintelligible; while his language on all subjects is constantly incorrect and ungrammatical. Still, so absorbing is the interest of his theme, that, though the book is undoubtedly unnecessarily long, it is but rarely tedious. And as it contains by far the best account in the language of many of Napoleon's campaigns, and especially of those in Germany and Russia, it must be studied by everyone who would form a correct notion of the most important series of transactions in modern history, and of the most extraordinary man who has ever influenced the destinies of nations.

The following passage may be taken as a favorable example of his style, being a carefully worked up picture of one of the most striking scenes in the invasion of Russia.

The weather was calm and serene, and the unclouded sky reminded the Italian soldiers of the sunsets in their beautiful country. To the roar of artillery, and the tumult of mortal conflict, succeeded a night of tranquillity unusual in the midst of such numerous assemblages of men, the result of the fatigue and exhaustion of the preceding days. During this momentary repose the fire spread with unresisted violence, and a vast column of flame ascended from the interior of the city. Around this blazing centre the corps of the French army were grouped in dense masses for several miles in circumference; the light of their watch-fires illuminated the heavens; but every eye was arrested by the spectacle of the burning city within. A dark band in front marked the yet unbroken line of the battlements; every loophole and embrasure was clearly defined by the resplendent light behind, whence volumes of flame and burning smoke arose, as from a vast volcano, over half the heavens: a lurid light like that of Vesuvius, was cast over the extended bivouacs of the French army, while the lofty domes of the cathedral, still untouched by the conflagration, stood in dark magnificence above the ocean of fire. The troops beheld with awe the splendid spectacle, and, uncertain of the event, rested in suspense all night on their arms.

'At three in the morning, a patrol of Davoust's scaled the walls, and penetrated without resistance into the interior of the town. Having met with neither inhabitants nor opponents, he returned to his corps, and the French advanced guard speedily entered the walls. They found the streets deserted. The work of destruction begun by the French howitzers, had been completed by the voluntary sacrifice of the inhabitants, who had fled with the retiring corps of their countrymen; and the invading columns, in all the pomp of military splendour, traversed in silence a ruined city, filled only with smoking walls and dying men. Never did the horrors of war appear in more striking colours than to the invading troops as they entered that devoted city. Almost all the houses were consumed or in ruins; dying soldiers or citizens encumbered the streets; a few miserable wretches were alone to be seen ransacking the yet smoking remains for any relics of their property which might have survived the conflagration. In the midst of this scene of woe, the cathedrals and churches which had withstood the flames alone offered an asylum to the unfortunate inhabitants; while the martial columns of the French army, marching in the finest order to the sound of military music through

the wreck occasioned by their arms, presented a grand and imposing spectacle. So skilfully, however, had the Russian retreat been conducted, that the magazines in the town had all been destroyed; the wounded, and great part of the inhabitants, withdrawn; and the bridges over the Dnieper broken down, amidst the horrors of the nocturnal conflagration following that dreadful day; leaving naked walls, and the cannon which mounted them, as the only trophies to the conqueror.

Writers of what may be called technical or professional history hardly come within the scope of a work on general literature. Yet the present century has been adorned by one author of that class of such pre-eminent merit that it can hardly be unseasonable to mention that the achievements in the Peninsular war of the greatest of British Generals have been described by an officer who served under him, Colonel Napier of the 43rd Regiment, not only with the military knowledge and skill of an experienced soldier, but with a mastery of all the arts of composition, with a command over all the resources of the language, with an animation and vigour which few authors by profession have ever equalled; and that his narrative of the Conquest of Scinde by his own brother, an undertaking still more gratifying to his fraternal pride, rivals his greater and better known work in all the qualities which can confer renown on an author, and which deservedly procure for the writings in which they are displayed a longevity more durable, as the Roman poet affirms, than brass or marble.

And thus again, though, in the selection of historians, I have confined myself to those writers who speak of modern Europe, using the term here in contradistinction to Europe of the classical ages;[1] and yielding in this to the ordinary way of speaking which seems to confine the study of the history of the Greeks and Romans to classical scholars; yet I feel that it is a limitation unsupported by reason, and I know not why, in truth, even those who have little or no familiarity with the great classical languages should on

[1] The mention of Gibbon is but a seeming exception to this rule, since his work does not begin before the end of the first century A.D. And its principal interest arises from its connection with the history of modern Europe.

that account be debarred from acquiring some knowledge of the history of the great nations which used those languages; of the mighty deeds of Alexander and Cæsar; of the struggles which animated the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero; or of the principles of that subtle philosophy and imaginative wisdom which Plato expounded to his disciples among the groves of the Academy. And those who, though unversed in Greek and Latin, would nevertheless fain learn something of these great events and noble-minded men, may fitly be informed here that the great school of English historians is as far beyond its Continental rivals in its treatment of the classical ages as in its delineation of events nearer to our own time, and, as such, apparently more interesting. They may be referred to Arnold's learned, accurate, and animated pages for a description of Annibal's campaigns, which, borrowing brilliancy from Livy, and accuracy from Polybius, presents to English readers as correct an idea of the mighty Carthaginian as, in the absence of Carthaginian annals, has ever been attainable by the modern student. And, while they perceive that it is equally correct and luminous in its explanation of the changes in and gradual development of the Roman constitution, they will lament, with all lovers of sound learning, that so great a work was broken off by the premature death of its accomplished author.

Again, though they must thus be reminded of a heavy loss which the nation has sustained, even since this volume has been in the press, they may be glad to be led to the pages of Grote, who in his History of Greece, has penetrated more deeply than any writer of any country, into all the depths of the ancient philosophy. Others may have equalled him in descriptions of the heroism with which the Greeks, under Leonidas and Themistocles, repelled the invasion of the Persian monarch at Thermopylæ and Salamis, and retaliated it by the overthrow of his descendant at Issus and Arbela; or of the more painful contest when Athenians and Spartans turned their fratricidal arms against each other, and when the intestine strife of rival factions laid the greater nation prostrate at the mercy of its rival, and a way was thus prepared for the supremacy over both

of a northern people who in the days of Xerxes were hardly acknowledged to be Greeks. But the teachings of philosophy are of wider and more enduring influence than the triumphs of the warrior; and in a judicious appreciation, in a clear and eloquent explanation, of the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, of their diversity, and of their value, not only to the Athenians of their own day, but to the people of all other countries and of all subsequent generations, no one has approached Mr. Grote.

A short extract from the writings of each will be a sufficient indication of what those whose inclination leads them to the study of such subjects may expect to find.

The following is Napier's description of the battle of Meeanee.

(Napier's Conquest of Scinde, p. 187.)

Thick as standing corn, and gorgeous as a field of flowers, were the Beloochees in their many-coloured garments and turbans. They filled the broad deep bed of the Fullaillee; they were clustered on both banks, and covered the plain beyond. Guarding their heads with large dark shields, they shook their sharp swords, gleaming in the sun, and their shouts rolled like a peal of thunder, as, with frantic might and gestures, they dashed against the front of the 22nd. But with shrieks as wild and fierce, and hearts as big, and arms as strong, the British soldiers met them with the queen of weapons, and laid their foremost warriors wallowing in blood. Then also the few guns that could be placed in position on the right of the 22nd, flanked by Henderson's small band of Madras sappers, swept diagonally the bed of the river, tearing the rushing masses with a horrible carnage. Soon the sepoy regiments, 12th and 25th, prolonged the line of fire to the left, coming into action successively in the same terrible manner. Clibborne's grenadiers were distant, skirmishing with the matchlock men in Kottree, when they should have charged them: but that was their commander's fault.

Now the Beloochees closed in denser masses, and the dreadful rush of their swordsmen was felt, and their shouts, answered by the pealing musketry, were heard along the line, and such a fight ensued as has seldom been told of in the records of war. For ever those wild fierce warriors, with shields held high and blades drawn back, strove with might and valour to break through the British ranks. No fire of small arms, no sweeping discharges of grape, no push of bayonets could drive them back; they gave their breasts to

the shot, their shields to the bayonets, and, leaping at the guns, were blown away by twenties at a time; their dead rolled down the steep slope by hundreds; but the gaps were continually filled from the rear, the survivors pressed forward with unabated fury, and the bayonet and sword clashed in full and frequent conflict.

Thus they fought, never more than five yards apart, often intermingled; and several times the different regiments were violently forced backwards, staggering under the might and passion of the swordsmen. But always their general was there to rally and cheer them. At his voice their strength returned, and they recovered ground, though nearly all their regimental leaders were down: for fast those leaders had fallen, dying as British officers always will do when they cannot win.

The next extract exhibits Mr. Grote's view of the ancient philosophers in his description of Socrates.

(History of Greece, vol. viii. p. 621).

Having thus touched upon Sokrates, both as first opener of the field of ethics to scientific study—and as author of a method, little copied and never paralleled since his time, for stimulating in other men's minds earnest analytical inquiry, I speak last about his theoretical doctrine. Considering the fanciful, far-fetched ideas, upon which alone the Pythagoreans and other predecessors had shaped their theories respecting virtues and vices, the wonder is that Sokrates, who had no better guides to follow, should have laid down an ethical doctrine which has the double merit of being true, as far as it goes, legitimate, and of comprehensive generality; though it errs, mainly by stating a part of the essential conditions of virtue (sometimes also a part of the ethical end) as if it were the whole. Sokrates resolved all virtue into knowledge or wisdom; all vice into ignorance or folly. To do right was the only way to impart happiness, or the least degree of unhappiness compatible with any given situation: now this was precisely what everyone wished for and aimed at—only that many persons, from ignorance, took the wrong road; and no man was wise enough always to take the right. But as no man was willingly his own enemy, so no man ever did wrong willingly; it was because he was not fully or correctly informed of the consequences of his own actions; so that the proper remedy to apply was enlarged teaching of consequences and improved judgment. To make him willing to be taught, the only condition required was to make him conscious of his own ignorance; the want of which consciousness was the real cause both of indocility and of vice.

That this doctrine sets forth one portion of the essential con-

ditions of virtue, is certain; and that too the most commanding portion, since there can be no assured moral conduct except under the supremacy of reason. But that it omits to notice, what is not less essential to virtue, the proper condition of the emotions, desires, etc., taking account only of the intellect, is also certain; and has been remarked by Aristotle as well as by many others. It is fruitless, in my judgment, to attempt by any refined explanation to make out that Sokrates meant by 'knowledge' something more than what is directly implied in the word. He had present to his mind, as the grand depravation of the human being, not so much vice as madness; that state in which a man does not know what he is doing. Against the vicious man, securities, both public and private, may be taken with considerable effect; against the madman there is no security except perpetual restraint. He is incapable of any of the duties incumbent on social man, nor can he, even if he wishes, do good either to himself or to others. The sentiment which we feel towards such an unhappy being is indeed something totally different from moral reprobation, such as we feel for the vicious man who does wrong knowingly. But Sokrates took measure of both with reference to the purposes of human life and society, and pronounced that the latter was less completely spoiled for those purposes than the former. Madness was ignorance at its extreme pitch, accompanied too by the circumstance that the madman himself was unconscious of his own ignorance, acting under a sincere persuasion that he knew what he was doing. But short of this extremity, there were many varieties and gradations in the scale of ignorance, which, if accompanied by false conceit of knowledge, differed from madness only in degree, and each of which disqualified a man from doing right, in proportion to the ground which it covered. The worst of all ignorance, that which stood nearest to madness, was when a man was ignorant of himself, fancying that he knew what he did not really know, and that he could do, or avoid, or endure what was quite beyond his capacity; when, for example, intending to speak the same truth, he sometimes said one thing, sometimes another, or, casting up the same arithmetical figures, made sometimes a greater sum, sometimes a less. A person who knows his letters, or an arithmetician, may doubtless write bad orthography, or cast up incorrectly, by design, but can also perform the operation correctly, if he chooses; while one ignorant of writing, or of arithmetic, cannot do it correctly, even though he should be anxious to do so. The former therefore comes nearer to the good orthographer or arithmetician than the latter. So if a man knows what is just, honourable, and good, but commits acts of a contrary character, he is juster, or comes nearer to being a just man,

than one who does not know what just acts are, and does not distinguish them from unjust; for this latter cannot conduct himself justly, even if he desires it ever so much.

Our last extract from these historians gives us Dr. Arnold's view of the civilisation of Rome at the beginning of its sixth century.

(History of Rome, chap. xxvi.)

There was as yet no regular drama, for Livius Andronicus did not begin to exhibit his plays till after the first Punic war; but there were pantomimic dances performed by Etruscan actors; there were the saturæ, or medleys, sung and acted by native performers; and there were the comic or satirical dialogues on some ludicrous story (fabellæ atellanæ), in which the actors were of a higher rank, as this entertainment was rather considered an old national custom than a spectacle exhibited for the public amusement. There were no famous poets, nor any Homer, to embody in an imperishable form the poetical traditions of his country; but there were the natural elements of poetry, and the natural love of it, and it was long the custom at all entertainments that each guest in his turn should sing some heroic song, recording the worthy deeds of some noble Roman. So also there was no history, but there was the innate desire of living in the memory of after ages; and in all the great families, panegyrical orations were delivered at the funeral of each of their members, containing a most exaggerated account of his life and actions. These orations existed in the total absence of all other statements, and from these chiefly the annalists of the succeeding century compiled their narratives; and thus every war is made to exhibit a series of victories, and all the most remarkable characters in the Roman story are represented as men without reproach, or of heroic excellence.

But whilst literature was unknown, and poetry, and even the drama itself, were in their earliest infancy, the Romans enjoyed with the keenest delight the sports of the circus, which resembled the great national games of Greece. Every year, in the month of September, four days were devoted to the celebration of what were called, indifferently, the Great or the Roman Games. Like all the spectacles of the ancient world, they were properly a religious solemnity, a great festival in honour of the three national divinities of the Capitoline temple, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. On the first day of the festival, the whole people went in procession from the Capitol through the Forum to the Circus; there the sacrifice was performed, and afterwards the exhibition of the various games began, which was so entirely a national ceremony that the magistrate of the highest rank who happened to be in Rome

gave the signal for the starting of the horses in the chariot-race. The circus itself was especially consecrated to the sun, and the colours by which the drivers of the chariots were distinguished were supposed to have a mystical allusion to the different seasons. Originally there were only two colours, white and red; the one a symbol of the snows of winter, the other of the fiery heat of summer; but two others were afterwards added, the spring-like green, and the autumnal grey or blue. The charioteers, who wore the same colours, were called the red, or white, or green, or blue band (*factio*), and these bands became in later times the subject of the strongest party feeling; for men attached themselves either to one or the other, and would as little have been induced to change their colour in the circus as their political party in the Commonwealth. It does not appear that these colours were connected with any real differences, social or political; there were no ideas of which they were severally the symbols; and thus, while the Commonwealth lasted, the bands of the circus seem to have excited no deeper or more lasting interest than the wishes of their respective partizans for their success in the chariot-race. But afterwards, when the emperor was known to favour any one colour more than another, that colour would naturally become the badge of his friends, and the opposite colour the rallying-point of his enemies; and when a real political feeling was connected with these symbols it was not wonderful that the bands of the circus became truly factions, and that their quarrels in the Lower Empire should have sometimes deluged Constantinople with blood.

Before closing this part of our subject, it is necessary to call attention also to the circumstance that regular histories are not the only works which should be studied by those who would acquire a correct knowledge of past ages, especially in our own country. Historians themselves have made constant use of writings contemporary with the events which they record, which from time to time have been given to the world under the name of diaries, journals, or correspondence; to which, of late years, has been added a variety of biographies of men of ability and influence on the transactions of their time; of ministers, warriors, orators, and men of learning and science; so that it may almost be said that as correct an insight into the past may be acquired from the perusal of these lighter works as from the more laborious study required by the pages of the professed historian. In some points they are even more valuable. No history written in a subsequent age can give an

equally correct idea of the feelings with which each important occurrence was regarded at the time when it took place; nor of the manners of the people, as indicated by a thousand minute entries in the pages of the journalist or letter-writer. Among the most deservedly celebrated are the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, which give a most lively picture of the state of England, and especially of the Court during the reign of Charles II. They are deservedly popular, not only for the animation with which they describe what the writers saw, but for the unpretending and engaging simplicity of their style; and in later times Lord Malmesbury's diary deserves almost equal praise for those qualities; while, as the author was at different times employed on diplomatic missions of the highest importance, his revelations have a solid importance of which the somewhat gossipping journals of those old chroniclers are necessarily destitute. Of letter-writers, Horace Walpole, the youngest son of the great minister, stands at the head by universal admission; though the same praise of simplicity of style cannot be awarded to his letters. In truth they may be said to be only nominally letters. They were not unpremeditated effusions to correspondents; but carefully elaborated accounts of the transactions of the day, drawn up with a view to subsequent publication, and largely coloured by the writer's political feelings, and often by what he conceived to be his duty of disparaging all who had ever been in opposition to his father. Still they are almost invariably lively and amusing; they give an excellent notion of the manners of people in the higher ranks of society, for the latter half of the last century. And as the writer was, above most men, behind the scenes, being cousin of Marshal Conway, Secretary of State in more than one Administration, he unfolds to us the secret motives of the conduct of his party in many most important transactions.

Of memoir-writers few surpass Mrs. Hutchinson, the widow of an officer who bore arms against the King in the great Rebellion, and even permitted himself to sit as one of his judges, and to sign the warrant for his death. Even those who most execrate the crime can pardon a wife pleading in defence of her husband. And when the fact that it is the advocacy of a bad cause is put out of sight,

all must admit the value of the book, not only for the light which it throws on the views of the more respectable portion of Cromwell's supporters, but also for the feminine purity and delicacy of mind which pervade the work, which, with the correctness and elegance of the style, bespeak the virtuous and accomplished English lady.

Of modern biographies, the life of our great admiral, by the prolific writer of whom we have spoken in our sketches of poets, Southey, has long been unanimously placed at the head; a rank which it well deserves by the vigour of its descriptions, the extreme beauty of its style, and its admirable conciseness; that quality being attributable in part to the circumstance that it was originally drawn up, not as an independent memoir, but as a review of a biography which had few of these qualities. The history of the Life of Nelson may prompt a desire that Macaulay had recast and enlarged the articles on Lord Chatham, Warren Hastings, and Clive in a similar manner.

And, though they are neither letters nor memoirs, but bear the unattractive name of lectures, any description of the sources of historical knowledge in our language would be very defective which did not direct the attention of the young reader to two series of lectures on the history of France. We owe them to two professors of history at Cambridge, Professor Smythe and Sir James Stephen; neither of whom give a connected narrative of the events of any period; but of whom the latter, by his comments on the most important parts of the French constitution as it was seen in operation to the end of the seventeenth century, illustrated as they are by vigorous sketches of St. Louis, of Sully, of Richelieu, of Colbert and Louvois, and of one or two of the most remarkable sovereigns: and the former by his minute and penetrating and most impartial investigation of the causes of the French Revolution; of the objects of the chief men of all parties during the earlier part of that terrible convulsion; and of the views taken of it among ourselves; have furnished us in a brief compass with better materials for arriving at a correct comprehension of the character of the French people than are supplied by the more pretentious works of any historian in either our language or their own.

CHAPTER XI.

MILTON.

A.D. 1608–1674.

THE next class which our arrangement will lead us to examine is that of the poets, though I do not propose to include every description of poetry; but as I have already spoken of the dramatists separately, though the greatest of them are poets, and though the drama has always been accounted one branch of poetry; so I do not design to speak of lyric poetry at this moment, but, for the convenience of comparison, shall treat of that in a subsequent chapter, as a distinct species of composition; and shall now confine myself to more elaborate works; composed, that is, on a larger scale: to epic, narrative, didactic, descriptive poems, and, in one or two instances, to satires. Shakespeare himself is not more confessedly at the head of dramatic poets than Milton is superior to all other writers of what may be called perhaps general poetry. And he also comes first on the list in point of time, since, for reasons which I have already mentioned, we may pass over Spenser, great in some respects as is the beauty of his writings.

It is not perhaps very easy to distinguish with precision between epic and narrative poetry. For, in fact, all epic poetry is narrative, and the terms might appear to be convertible; but the general understanding and assent of mankind supplies the want of an accurate definition, and has confined the use of the term epic to those works whose subject is of a grand and important character, and which treat of it with great copiousness, that is to say, at great length. Some critics have called such works heroic poems, and have distinguished those of a lighter class or smaller dimensions as minor epics, under which head Professor Conington classes not only such works as the 'Rape of the Lock,' but satires like the 'Dunciad.' But the old term epic

seems more convenient, and, however strict logicians may cavil at the confinement of it to poems of the highest class alone, in point of fact it is never misunderstood.

Milton was far from confining himself to epic poetry. He wrote sonnets; lyric poems of enduring popularity, such as 'L'Allegro,' with its contrast 'Il Penseroso,' and several others; with some even of a dramatic character, one of which, 'Comus,' is almost as admirable for its delicate purity and felicity as 'Paradise Lost' is for its lofty solemnity and vigour. But the fame of all his other works is so completely overshadowed by that of 'Paradise Lost' that it is as an epic poet alone that he is chiefly regarded, and it is principally in that character that I shall speak of him. Milton derived his name from the manor of Milton in Oxfordshire, which had belonged to his family for several generations, but which was lost to his father, who was disinherited on account of his abandonment of the Roman Catholic religion, of which his grandfather was a staunch adherent, and who in consequence became an attorney, and made a considerable fortune in that profession. The poet was born in London, in December 1608; and, after receiving the foundation of a good education at the city school which then bore the highest reputation, St. Paul's, he was sent to Christ's College, Cambridge, to complete it, where he certainly acquired a very high degree of scholarship, but where he is believed to have incurred the marked disfavour of his tutors, probably on account of his plunging into the theological controversies of the day, and taking the side which was not approved by the University authorities. It is, at all events, certain that, from scruples at certain oaths, he laid aside at that time the idea which he had originally entertained of taking holy orders, though some of his subsequent compositions prove that he had not yet adopted the rigorously puritanical doctrines which he subsequently maintained. He soon began to distinguish himself by the exercise of his poetical talents. His Hymn on the Nativity is assigned to his twenty-first year. And when, three years later, his father quitted London to establish himself at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, the more poetical

scenery of the banks of the Thames had the not unnatural effect of filling his mind with rural images, which found expression in his verse; and in the two or three years which followed his removal from the city he wrote 'Lycidas,' a monody on a deceased friend; the 'Arcades,' a couple of songs, connected by a speech, to form part of a dramatic entertainment, for representation at a private house; and the more elaborate masque of 'Comus,' which was composed for a similar object, and was acted by the family of the Earl of Bridgewater, and of which I shall speak hereafter. But he became restless in retirement; and after wavering for a time between plans of studying the law in London and travelling, he finally decided on foreign travel; and having, while at Horton, made the acquaintance of the celebrated Provost of Eton, Sir Henry Wotton, he procured from that eminent man, whose long experience as a diplomatist had rendered him especially competent to give advice on such a subject, instructions to guide him in his travels, and likewise introductions to many of the most distinguished men of learning in the countries which he designed to visit. In France he made the acquaintance of Grotius, then residing at Paris as the ambassador of Sweden. In Italy he was able to procure admission to Galileo, though that great discoverer was at the time expiating his great services to science in the dungeons of the Inquisition; while some of the scholars at Florence bestowed such panegyrics on the poems which he showed them as bred in him the conviction that, 'by labour and intense study, he might be able to leave something so written to after times as that they should not willingly let it die.' Even he, conscious as he must have been of intellectual powers far surpassing those of ordinary men, did not conceive that without great diligence and labour he could achieve anything worth remembering. He had already implied the same truth in his 'Lycidas,' in which he had coupled the attainment of fame with the 'scorning of delights, and living laborious days.' And on his return to England, after a sojourn in foreign countries of little more than a year, he at once applied himself to hard work, though not of the kind that was most congenial to his

disposition. He became a schoolmaster, with the design, singular in one who was to found his own renown on eminence of a purely literary kind, of introducing a reform into education, and instructing his pupils in scientific subjects, to the exclusion of the more usual studies of history and poetry. But his attention was not wholly given to teaching. He had a keen appetite for controversy, and plunged with great zeal and vehemence into the political and theological disputes which were beginning to agitate the nation from one end to the other. At what time or under what circumstances he adopted the opinions which he henceforward advocated is not known. His conduct was so far from being influenced by any advantage in argument that the enemies of the Church had hitherto gained over its champions that he avowed, apparently as his principal reason for taking up the cause of the Puritans, that they were inferior to the prelates in learning; but, whatever were his motives, he at once assailed the Church and Episcopacy with unwearied bitterness and perseverance, coupling the University with them in his denunciations, in a way which may perhaps lead to a suspicion that the disapproval with which the college authorities had visited his conduct as an undergraduate had some share in causing him to regard with ill-will an institution so intimately connected with the University as the Church.

But with this feeling was apparently combined a general spirit of insubordination, which inclined him to spurn at all restraints of law and order, and which was displayed in a not very creditable manner in his married life. In 1643 he married a Miss Powell, who, singularly enough, considering the earnestness with which he proclaimed himself an adherent of the Parliament, was the daughter of a gentleman distinguished for his loyalty. But he soon quarrelled with her; and when she left his house, and refused to return to him, he wrote a pamphlet to advocate liberty of divorce, and contemplated exemplifying its doctrines by his own practice, repudiating his wife by his own authority, and marrying another. But he was saved from taking such a step, which even in those days of dis-

order might have brought him into unpleasant contact with the law, by the good sense of some common friends, who ventured to reconcile the pair. And so complete was the reconciliation that, when he became a person of influence, and the Royalists were borne down and persecuted, he sheltered her father and her brothers in his own house.

However, neither domestic nor political agitations had power so to absorb his attention as to make him lay aside the pursuit of literature, to which, as we have seen, he trusted, as the ladder by which he was to mount to an immortal fame. Even while the Rebellion was at its height, and civil war was raging over the land, he found time to publish a prose treatise in support of the right of all men to print whatever they might choose, without being dependent on the licence of the magistrate; and a small volume of poems, chiefly Latin, but containing two English lyrics of great excellence, 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' in which the cheerful and the pensive man are ingeniously contrasted, though even the latter is exhibited as deriving a pleasure from the objects which surround him equal to that which excites the cheerful man, different as of course the emotions which impart that pleasure must be in the two cases. They were published in 1645, though Johnson, arguing from the delight which the pensive man takes in the cathedral's

> storied windows, richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light,

where

> the pealing organs blow
> To the full-voic'd choir below,

and which indicates a feeling utterly at variance with that of the fierce fanatics who took a savage pleasure in destroying all the memorials of ancient devotion, and stalled their horses in Winchester Cathedral, infers that these poems must have been written before the author became a deserter from and an enemy to the National Church.

To those fanatics, the vigour of his prose style was a greater recommendation than the gracefulness of his poetry. After the murder of the king, he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State; and in this capacity he

was employed to write, first, a treatise that might weaken the effect of the Eikon Basilike, which on its first publication had a powerful effect on the minds of men from being believed to have been the work of Charles himself, though it is now almost universally admitted to have been written by Dr. Gauden; and afterwards, a second essay, in reply to one which Charles II. had procured from Salmasius, a Leyden professor, in defence of the cause of his father and of monarchy. To this Milton gave the title of 'A Defence of the People of England,' as if the English people had consented to the atrocious crime perpetrated by Cromwell and a part of his army; or as if Lady Fairfax's statement that 'not one-tenth part of the people' assented to the deed, were not notoriously within the truth. Charles is said to have given Salmasius 100*l.* for his performance: Milton was paid 1000*l.*, but neither treatise was worth the money. Milton's was made up partly of personal abuse of his antagonist, partly of pedantic criticisms on his Latin; for, as both parties desired to plead their cause to all Europe, both works were written in that language, which was still the chief medium of communication between scholars of different countries. The importance of the principles at stake kindled feelings of personal animosity in the two antagonists, though they had never seen each other. Before many months had passed Salmasius died, and Milton became blind; and, to quote the description of Johnson, 'As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius' life, and both, perhaps, with more malignity than reason.'

His blindness, which by the year 1652 or 1653 became total, would seem to have disqualified him for the performance of his official duties; and, as he did not at once resign his post, may probably have been the reason why the celebrated Andrew Marvell was given him as a colleague in it. But bitterly as his works prove that he felt that severest of all afflictions, it was fortunate for the world; for it gradually drew off his attention from politics, and drove him to resume his poetical labours on a grander scale: so that it is to his blindness, in a great degree, if not entirely,

that we owe 'Paradise Lost.' For many years he had contemplated, or at least, had desired to undertake, some great work, but he was long perplexed by the difficulty of deciding on a worthy subject; and when he had chosen his theme, he at first conceived it more suited to a tragedy than to an epic poem, and even drew out a plan for a drama, though, as Johnson points out, it would have resembled those early performances which had been common a couple of centuries earlier under the name of mysteries, rather than the tragedies of the regular stage. The progress of political events and the restoration of the king threatened for a moment to put a violent interruption to his work, on which, by the time when Charles recovered his throne, he was labouring with great assiduity; though during half of each year he nearly laid it aside, from a curious fancy that his imagination and invention were less ready and rich in the spring and summer than in the autumn and winter. His defence of the murder of the King's father, with some tracts that he had very recently written, even after Cromwell's death, against the Church, and in favour of a republic, had marked him out as one of those who were hardly entitled to the full benefit of the Act of Oblivion. His 'Defence of the People of England' was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman; and the Attorney-General was directed to prosecute him as the writer. But in some way or other he escaped punishment. It is generally understood that, in the time of the Rebellion, he had successfully exerted his influence with Cromwell to save the life of Sir William Davenant, a zealous royalist; and that now, when he, in his turn, was in danger, Davenant requited his kindness by an equally seasonable protection. It is certain, at all events, that he was released, after a very short imprisonment. And shortly afterwards, he married a Miss Marshall, a lady of good family in Cheshire. She was his third wife. His first had died seven years before; leaving him three daughters; and the second, whom he married soon afterwards, died in her first confinement. But the third was the most unlucky match of all, according to the account of his nephew, Mr. Phillips, who left a brief memoir of him, to which all his subsequent

biographers have been indebted for most of their knowledge. For she proved a genuine stepmother, ill-treating his daughters while he lived, and cheating them after he was dead. I have mentioned his living at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, as a young man; and he retired for a while to another small town in the same county, Chalfont St. Peters, when the Great Plague drove out of London all who were masters of their own movements. But he returned to London as soon as the danger was over; and then, in 1667, he published his great poem, which had occupied him for at least twelve years.

It was well that he had confidence enough in its merit to look to fame as his paymaster; for the entire price which he could obtain from a publisher was only five pounds, with a claim to further sums of the same amount, till, by the time that four thousand copies had been sold, he was to have received twenty pounds. Such a price seems ridiculous to us at the present day, but there is no reason to think that the publisher realised an unfair profit by his bargain. He certainly did not think so himself, for, after he had acquired the entire copyright by purchase from the poet's widow, he sold it to another publisher for twenty-five pounds. But, though the mention of these sums seems to show that the poem was neglected or disapproved, this was not the case. In eleven years three thousand copies were sold of it. And there is no reason to believe that an equal number of copies of any large work had been ever sold in the same time. Johnson has pointed out that in the forty years which ended two years before the publication of Paradise Lost, only two editions of Shakespeare, in all probability 'not making together a thousand copies,' were called for. The truth is that the seventeenth century was not a reading age. There were a few scholars of varied accomplishments and deep learning, but very few who read for amusement, and none who read for fashion's sake; for study was not fashionable in the reign of the Merry Monarch.

In the third book of 'Paradise Lost,' Milton speaks with a manly resignation, though with a deep feeling of the privation, of his blindness; and in 1670 he published a drama, 'Samson Agonistes,' full of allusions to his own condition, the scene being laid in the days when Samson, too,

suffered under the same infliction. And in the same year he also sent forth a sequel to 'Paradise Lost,' called 'Paradise Regained,' which he himself preferred to it: but neither in his own day, nor since, has the general verdict coincided with his opinion. Such as it was, it was his last poetical work. He wrote one or two more tracts, the last of which, a 'Treatise on True Religion,' shows, in the judgment of Johnson, a less unfriendly spirit towards the Church than he had formerly entertained. But his returning reverence for her, if indeed he was beginning to admit such a feeling into his heart, had no time to ripen. His early blindness probably arose from some weakness of constitution; and in 1674, an attack of gout carried him off when he was on the point of completing his sixty-sixth year.

To speak first of his lesser poems, Johnson has attacked 'Lycidas' with a severity of criticism which not only resembles personal acrimony, but which, if admitted, would condemn no small portion of all the poetry that ever has been written. Because Milton, borrowing the ideas and figures of the old classical pastorals, represents himself and the friend whom he laments as two shepherds, driving a-field together, and both together hearing

> What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
> Battening their flocks with the fresh dews of night,

Johnson, with a matter-of-factness (if one may coin such a word) which, if it were not diverting, would be ridiculous, declares his and our knowledge that 'they never drove a-field, and that they had no flocks to batten; pronounces that the inherent improbability' of such images 'always forces dissatisfaction on the mind' that 'nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell.' It seems to me that we may admit that Milton has chosen to copy the ancients in the use of pastoral allegory, without allowing, as a necessary consequence, that such allegory is 'vulgar, and therefore dis-

gusting;' that, if we grant to poets the right of employing such figurative modes of speech,[1] Milton has certainly not availed himself of the licence in any degree not abundantly borne out by the examples of other poets, whom all critics have agreed in admiring; while, short as the monody is, it contains one passage of original beauty, one or two lines of which have become almost proverbial, and which, if they stood alone, might well have saved far worse companions from such unshrinking condemnation.

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate[2] the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble minds)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears;
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies;
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heaven expect the meed.'

'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' even Johnson admits to be charming; and 'Comus' he praises still more highly, even discerning in it the dawn or twilight of 'Paradise Lost.' It is indeed an exquisite cabinet picture, combining rich fancy with delicate taste; while the heroine is placed in a situation of danger sufficient to excite interest and

[1] Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.

[2] A translation of the Latin *Meditor*, as in
Sylvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena.—Virg. *Ecl.* i. 2.
rather than an employment of the verb in its ordinary English meaning.

sympathy without overpowering the reader with too great alarm. Perhaps Milton has given no greater proof of the instinctive purity and refinement of his imagination than he has afforded here by the skill with which, while borrowing some of the most perilous parts of the Greek fable (for Comus and his crew are obviously descendants of Pan and his satyrs), he had yet avoided every indecorous image or idea.

But, however great may be the beauty of these, his minor poems, as they are generally called, their fame is so completely overshadowed by that of his great epic, that on that we must dwell a little more minutely. Johnson and Hallam have agreed in praising the subject, as the finest that has ever been chosen for an epic poem: 'It is not the destruction of a city, such as is that of the Iliad;' 'nor the conduct of a colony, nor the foundation of an empire,' like that of the Æneid: 'the subject is the fate of worlds; the revolutions of heaven and earth.' But the praise which they afterwards bestow on him for the skill with which he has extricated himself from its difficulties seem to show that in reality the choice was not so judicious as they assert; that the subject, though grand, solemn, and all-important, was, in fact, too grand and solemn to be treated at once with adequate vigour and due reverence; and that one more on a level with human faculties would have been better. Johnson commends the poet for having put into 'Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear: because to make him speak as a rebel without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination was one great difficulty of the undertaking.' We may surely doubt the wisdom of a choice which involved such a difficulty. But even allowing, as Johnson affirms, that he has 'extricated himself from it with great happiness,' and that in a poem on such a subject he could not dispense with introducing the archfiend as one of his characters, I question whether the same necessity existed for bringing the Deity himself, if one may use such an expression, on the stage. And it seems to me that none of the blasphemy put into the mouth of Satan, justified as it is in some degree by the necessity of making his language consistent with his character and situation, approaches the irreverence of introducing a dialogue be-

tween God the Father and the Son; and that it is an act of presumption wholly without excuse for an uninspired man to venture upon. Milton may have been unconsciously led to overlook the impropriety of such a personification of the Almighty by being habituated to the irreverent and indecent familiarity with which his idol Cromwell and his followers were wont to speak of the communications which they pretended to hold with the Supreme Being, and to represent themselves as direct ministers of his will: but, even if the surmise be correct, it is but an explanation of, not an excuse for, his conduct. The imprudence of putting himself in a situation in which he was compelled to make Satan speak at all may be illustrated by the history of Byron's drama of 'Cain.' In that, also, Satan is one of the chief interlocutors, by his blasphemous subtleties tempting the previously contented and happy Cain into the commission of fratricide. In the opinion of two most competent conscientious judges, the language of 'Cain' is in no respect more irreligious than that in 'Paradise Lost.' Sir Walter Scott, while admitting that 'it might shock one class of readers,' declared that the same men 'must condemn the "Paradise Lost," to be consistent.'[1] And a still higher authority on such a point, Bishop Heber, who reviewed the drama in the 'Quarterly Review,' expressly affirms that 'the expressions of Cain and Lucifer are not more offensive to the ears of piety than such discourses must necessarily be, or than Milton, without offence, has put into the mouths of beings similarly situated;'[2] while Byron (as he took credit to himself for having done) had 'avoided introducing the Deity, as in Scripture (though Milton does, and not very wisely either), and had adopted His angel as sent to Cain instead.'[3] On the justification of Byron's language afforded by the precedent of Milton, the Bishop's opinion may be surely taken as decisive. Unhappily, while Milton was believed to have been animated with devout feelings, and holy purposes, in composing 'Paradise Lost,' no such favorable interpretation was put on Byron's motives in writing 'Cain;' and the Lord Chancellor decided that 'Cain'

[1] Byron's Life and Works, vol. xiv. p. 9.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 106.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 5.

was too blasphemous a production to be entitled to the protection of the law of copyright. If Lord Eldon's judgment was sound, and no greater judge has ever adorned the woolsack, it was not wise of Milton to choose a subject which, with a judge who might have happened to take an unfavorable view of his character and motives, would have exposed him to a similar condemnation.

To recur to Johnson's criticism; another, and perhaps, if the poem be looked at as a work of art, and with reference to its effect, a more serious drawback to the subject, is that it comprises neither human action nor human manners; the man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other human beings can ever know; and the inevitable consequence is that the reader can feel little or no interest in their fortunes. And again, in the warfare between the devils and the Almighty, no act can prevent us from constantly perceiving that the result of the conflict is not, and cannot be, dubious; and some fluctuations of hope and fear are indispensable, if human sympathy is to be excited. That, if we keep the deficiencies inseparable from such a subject out of sight, the composition of the poem is admirable from the order and clearness with which the different events proceed to their accomplishment, we may readily agree; though Johnson has also pointed out some strange inconsistencies, arising from the way in which Milton has 'unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body.' A much more serious error, as being a radical defect of taste, arising apparently from a pedantic pride of scholarship, is his continual intrusion of allusions to the heathen mythology; and one strange passage in the second book is hardly to be paralleled for the strange perversity of judgment which it displays in its misapplication of a classical allegory. Virgil, in that beautiful passage in which the Sibyl conducts Æneas through the Elysian fields, has represented the spirits or shades of the blessed as enjoying the same pastimes that formed the recreation of the men themselves while on earth. The 'magnanimous heroes' of old wars still find pleasure in the brightness of their armour and the speed of their

horses. Others still, as while in life, of milder mood, hang with delighted admiration on the sweet song of Orpheus.[1] It is strange indeed that, because Ilus and Assaracus, and Dardanus, the founder of Troy, were permitted such enjoyments, by the gods whose descendants they were, Milton should think it consistent with common sense or propriety to represent the devils as similarly indulged by their justly offended Maker. He even amplifies Virgil's picture; aggravating, if possible, the indecency by choosing as the moment of their holiday the breaking up of the Council, the Stygian Council, as he calls it, in which each fiend has vied with the other in blasphemous and threatening machinations against the Most High.

(Book ii. 528.)

Part on the plain, or in the air sublime,
Upon the wing, or in swift race contend,

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[1] Necnon Threïcius longâ cum veste sacerdos
Obloquitur numeris septem discrimina vocum;
Jamque eadem digitis, jam pectine pulsat eburno.
Hic genus antiquum Teucri, pulcherrima proles,
Magnanimi heroës, nati melioribus annis;
Ilusque, Assaracusque, et Trojæ Dardanus auctor.
Arma procul, currusque virûm miratur inanes.
Stant terrâ defixæ hastæ, passimque soluti
Per campos pascuntur equi; quæ gratia curruum
Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos.—*Æn.* vi. 645.

Thus translated by Dryden:—

The Thracian bard, surrounded by the rest,
There stands conspicuous in his flowing vest,
His flying fingers and harmonious quill
Strike seven distinguished notes, and seven at once they fell.
Here found they Teucer's old heroic race,
Born better times and happier years to grace,
Assaracus and Ilus hero enjoy
Perpetual fame with him who founded Troy;
The chief beheld their chariots from afar,
Their shining arms, and coursers trained to war;
Their lances fixed in earth, their steeds around,
Free from their harness, graze the flowery ground:
The love of horses, which they had alive,
And care of chariots after death survive.

Dryden, *Æn.* vi. 885.

As at th' Olympian games or Pythian fields;
Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal
With rapid wheels, or fronted brigades form.
Others more mild,
Retreated in a silent valley, sing
With notes angelical to many a harp
Their own heroic deeds and hapless fall
By doom of battle; and complain that fate
Free virtue should enthrall to force or chance.
Their song was partial; but the harmony
(What could it less when spirits immortal sing?)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience.

It is almost superfluous to point out that he is here giving Satan and his followers joys which, before they had forfeited God's power, would have been as much beneath their notice as in their fallen state they were above their deserts. To counterbalance this, we must point out that there are other passages in which a happier imitation of the classic poets has inspired him with thoughts of noble and most appropriate sublimity. There is hardly a grander picture in the whole 'Iliad' than that of the universal tumult which was spread through all creation by the battle of the gods; when Strife[1] sprung to her feet, and Minerva, as she stalked along, shouted, now standing by the wall, and now on the storm-lashed shore; and Mars, like a whirlwind, raised his battle-cry on the other side; and Jupiter gave forth his thunders; and from below, Neptune shook the earth and the lofty mountain-tops; and Ida quivered, and the city of the Trojans, and the ships of the Greeks; and

[1] ἔδδεισεν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρων, Ἀϊδωνεύς·
δείσας δ' ἐκ θρόνου ἆλτο, καὶ ἴαχε, μή οἱ ὕπερθε
γαῖαν ἀναῤῥήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,
οἰκία δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι φανήῃ
σμερδαλέ', εἰρωέντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοίπερ.—*Il.* xx. 65.

As Pope translates it:—

Deep in th' infernal regions of the dead,
Th' infernal monarch rear'd his horrid head,
Leapt from his throne, lest Neptune's arm should lay
His dark dominions open to the day,
And pour in light on Pluto's drear abodes,
Abhorr'd by men, and dreadful even to gods.—*Il.* xx. 62.

Pluto himself, the king of the dead, trembled, and sprang from his throne, and yelled with alarm lest Neptune should break up the very foundations of his realm, and lay open his lurid depths to the light of day. But, grand as the picture is, Milton's description of the awful confusion when the victorious Messiah drove the defeated rebels thunderstruck before him down into the gulf is worthy of his model:—

(Book vi. 867.)

Hell heard th' insufferable noise; Hell saw
Heav'n ruining from heaven, and would have fled
Affrighted; but strict fate had cast too deep
Her dark foundations, and too fast had bound.
Nine days they fell: Confounded Chaos roar'd,
And felt tenfold confusion in their fall
Through his wild anarchy; so huge a rout
Encumber'd him with ruin.

And it seems to me that it is in detached passages such as this, of a sublimity unequalled in our language, that Milton's claim to pre-eminence is best founded. Another equal, and not unlike it, is his description of Death when the monster advances to his first meeting with Satan:—

(Book ii. 666.)

The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart; what seem'd its head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides: Hell trembled as he strode.

Coleridge has remarked that Satan is Milton's hero, and that his distinctive character is pride and sensual indulgence, finding in itself the motive of action. But it must be observed that Milton's devils do not all resemble one another. On the contrary, there are perhaps no passages in which his invention is more advantageously displayed than in the different character which he assigns to each fiend in the grand council of war which opens the

second book. Satan, of course, comes first, and is introduced with great pomp as the presiding spirit:—

(Book ii. 1.)

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat; by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence; and, from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high; insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heav'n; and, by success untaught,
His proud imaginations thus displayed.

Despair is the one feeling which all the devils have in common. It is a part, and not the least dreadful part, of their punishment; and despair makes all its victims fierce; but Moloch, being less proud than Satan, is fiercer still; he is more cunning, and still more desperate and reckless:—

(Book ii. 43.)

He ceas'd; and next him Moloch, sceptred king,
Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest spirit
That fought in Heav'n, now fiercer by despair:
His trust was with the Eternal to be deem'd
Equal in strength; and rather than be less
Car'd not to be at all; with that care lost
Went all his fear: of God, or Hell, or worse,
He reck'd not; and these words thereafter spake.

The character of the next in order, Belial, seems borrowed in some degree from that of Drances in the Æneid:[1] fair to look at, eloquent and plausible, but cowardly.

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[1] Tum Drances idem infensus, quem gloria Turni
Obliquâ invidiâ stimulisque agitabat amaris:
Largus opum, et linguâ melior, sed frigida bello
Dextera, consiliis habitus non futilis auctor,
Seditione potens.—*Æn.* xi. 336.

Thus translated by Dryden:—

Then Drances took the word, who grudg'd long since
The rising glories of the Daunian prince;
Factious and rich, bold at the council board,
But cautious in the field, he shunn'd the sword,
A close cavalier and tongue-valiant lord.—*Æn.* x. 510.

(Book ii. 106.)

He ended frowning, and his look denounc'd
Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous
To less than gods. On th' other side up rose
Belial, in act more graceful and humane;
A fairer person lost not Heav'n; he seem'd
For dignity compos'd, and high exploit:
But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low:
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful: yet he pleas'd the ear,
And with persuasive accent thus began.

Of Mammon we have no specific description: his name speaks for itself; but Beëlzebub is presented with rare dignity; he seems intended as a personification of the highest worldly wisdom; of the most profound statesmanship which can exist without religion. And it is he who desires a diversion, by carrying their attacks into 'another world,' and its inhabitants, 'some new race call'd man.'

(Book ii. 299.)

Which when Beëlzebub perceiv'd, than whom,
Satan except, none higher sat, with grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
A pillar of state; deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat, and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic, though in ruin: sage he stood
With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention still as night
Or Summer's noon-tide air, while thus he spake.

It deserves to be remarked, as indicative of the poet's very peculiar views on some subjects, that he not only endows the devils with great capacity, in which he is clearly warranted, but also with some of the loftiest and purest of human virtues; with disinterestedness, and if I may so say, patriotism. Satan breaks up the council, and undertakes in person the investigation of the position of earth and its new-born inhabitants; recognising it at the

same time as a task of no trifling difficulty and danger. The devils gratefully acknowledge his self-devotion:

(Book ii. 480.)

Nor fail'd they to express how much they prais'd
That for the general safety he despis'd
His own: for neither do the spirits damn'd
Lose all their virtue; lest bad men should boast
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,
Or close ambition, varnish'd o'er with zeal.

That the chief circumstances of the different battles should be imitated from Homer is natural enough. The combat of Abdiel with Satan is full of resemblances to descriptions in the 'Iliad,' too obvious to require pointing out:

(Book vi. 189.)

So saying, a noble stroke he lifted high,
Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell
On the proud crest of Satan, that no sight,
Nor motion of swift thought, less could his shield,
Such ruin intercept: ten paces huge
He back recoil'd; the tenth on bended knee
His massy spear upstay'd; as if on earth
Winds under ground, or waters forcing way,
Sidelong had push'd a mountain from his seat,
Half sunk with all his pines. Amazement seiz'd
The rebel Thrones, but greater rage, to see
Thus foil'd their mightiest; ours joy fill'd, and shout,
Presage of victory, and fierce desire
Of battle: whereat Michaël bid sound
Th' Arch-Angel trumpet; through the vast of Heav'n
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
Hosannah to the High'st: nor stood at gaze
The adverse legions, nor less hideous join'd
The horrid shock. Now storming fury rose,
And clamour such as heard in Heav'n till now
Was never; arms on armour clashing bray'd
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots rag'd; dire was the noise
Of conflict; overhead the dismal hiss
Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
And flying vaulted either host with fire.
So under fiery cope together rush'd
Both battles main, with ruinous assault

And inextinguishable rage. All Heaven
Resounded; and had Earth been then, all Earth
Had to her centre shook. What wonder? when
Millions of fierce encount'ring Angels fought
On either side, the least of whom could wield
These elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions: how much more of power
Army against army numberless to raise
Dreadful combustion warr'ing, and disturb,
Though not destroy, their happy native seat;
Had not th' eternal King omnipotent,
From his stronghold of Heav'n, high over-rul'd
And limited their might; though number'd such
As each divided legion might have seem'd
A numerous host; in strength each armed hand
A legion; led in fight, yet leader seem'd
Each warrior single as in chief, expert
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
Of battle, open when, and when to close
The ridges of grim war: no thought of flight,
None of retreat, no unbecoming deed
That argued fear; each on himself rely'd,
As only in his arm the moment lay
Of victory: deeds of eternal fame
Were done, but infinite; for wide was spread
That war and various; sometimes on firm ground
A standing fight, then, soaring on main wing,
Tormented all the air; all air seem'd then
Conflicting fire. Long time in even scale
The battle hung; till Satan, who that day
Prodigious pow'r had shown, and met in arms
No equal, ranging through the dire attack
Of fighting Seraphim confus'd, at length
Saw where the sword of Michael smote, and fell'd
Squadrons at once; with huge two-handed sway
Brandish'd aloft the horrid edge came down
Wide wasting; such destruction to withstand
He hasted, and oppos'd the rocky orb
Of tenfold adamant, his ample shield,
A vast circumference.

But when Milton represents the Almighty as having recourse to the same expedient for preventing a combat between Gabriel and Satan, which Jupiter in the Iliad employs to determine whether Achilles or Hector shall

conquer, he is led by his fondness for copying the great Greek into an inconceivable disparagement of the omnipotence of the Almighty. It is strange indeed that anyone with a rightful feeling of reverence for the Lord of Lords should represent Him as in a state of alarm lest any deed of inferior spirits could affect His unapproachable, imperishable throne. Yet when Satan confronts the angel, Milton tells us

(Book iv. 990.)

> Now dreadful deeds
> Might have ensued, nor only Paradise
> In this commotion, but the starry cope
> Of Heaven perhaps, or all the elements
> At least had gone to wrack, disturb'd and torn
> With violence of this conflict, had not soon
> Th' Eternal, to prevent such horrid fray,
> Hung forth in Heav'n his golden scales, yet seen
> Betwixt Astræa and the Scorpion sign,
> Wherein all things created first he weigh'd.
> In these he put two weights,
> The sequel each of parting and of fight:
> The latter quick up flew, and kick'd the beam.[1]

It is a proof, worth noting (though I will content myself with pointing out the passage, instead of quoting it at length), of Milton's preference for Homer over Virgil that, though the idea of Michael conducting Adam to a hill from which he may look down on the future generations of mankind is manifestly taken from Virgil, the passage in which we have the most unmistakable imitation of either is a copy not of the vision granted to Æneas, but of the shield of Achilles. The warriors who

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[1] καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα·
ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο,
Τὴν μὲν Ἀχιλλῆος, τὴν δ' Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο·
ἕλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβών· ῥέπε δ' Ἕκτορος αἴσιμον ἦμαρ.—*Il.* X. 209.

Jove lifts the golden balances, that show
The faults of men, and things below,
Here each contending hero's lot he tries,
And weighs with equal hand their destinies,
Low sinks the scale uncharg'd with Hector's fate,
Heavy with death it sinks, and hell receives the weight.

to a city strong
Lay siege encamped.

The 'council at the city gates,' the heralds; even

The herd of beeves, fair oxen and fair kine
From a fat meadow-ground,

read almost like a translation of the description of the ornaments with which Vulcan's handiwork was made worthy of the hero who was to bear it.

Milton is more original in his softer passages: in his description of

(Book iv. 132.)

—— Eden, where delicious Paradise,
Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green,
As with a rural mound, the champain head
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
Access denied; and overhead up grew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
A sylvan scene; and, as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung,
And higher than that wall a circling row
Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colours mix'd:
On which the Sun more glad impress'd his beams
Than on fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
When God hath shower'd the earth; so lovely seemed
That landscape.[1]

And there was no source but his own warm, genial, yet ever-pure imagination from which he could derive the account which Adam gives to Raphael of his rapturous admiration of Eve when first seen as the cause and partner of his happiness:—

(Book viii. 462.)

Abstract as in a trance, methought I saw,
Though sleeping, where I lay, and saw the shape

[1] See *Il.* xviii. 490–545.

Still glorious before whom awake I stood:
Who stooping open'd my left side, and took
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm,
And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound,
But suddenly with flesh fill'd up and heal'd:
The rib he form'd and fashion'd with his hands;
Under his forming hands a creature grew,
Manlike, but different sex; so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd
And in her looks; which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight.
She disappeared, and left me dark; I wak'd
To find her, or for ever to deplore
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure:
When out of hope, behold her, not far off,
Such as I saw her in my dream, adorn'd
With what all Earth or Heav'n could bestow
To make her amiable: On she came,
Led by her heavenly Maker, though unseen,
And guided by his voice; nor uninform'd
Of nuptial sanctity and marriage rites:
Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.
I, overjoy'd, could not forbear aloud.
This turn hath made amends; Thou hast fulfill'd
Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
Giver of all things fair! but fairest this
Of all thy gifts! nor enviest. I now see
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself
Before me: Woman is her name; of Man
Extracted: for this cause he shall forego
Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;
And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul.
She heard me thus; and though divinely brought,
Yet innocence, and virgin modesty,
Her virtue, and the conscience of her worth,
That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won,
Not obvious, nor obtrusive, but, retir'd,
The more desirable; or, to say all,
Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought,
Wrought in her so, that, seeing me, she turn'd:

I follow'd her; she what was honour knew,
And with obsequious majesty approv'd
My pleaded reason. To the nuptial bower
I led her blushing like the morn: all Heaven,
And happy constellations, on that hour
Shed their selectest influence; the earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill;
Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,
Disporting, till the amorous bird of night
Sung spousal, and bid haste the evening star
On his hill-top to light the bridal lamp.

I have already spoken of 'Comus.' No praise of its elegance or delicacy can be expressed that is not borne out by the following passages. The lady, who has been benighted, and has lost her way in the dense wood, yet fears no evil, so strong is her faith in the Author of all good, and in His ever-watchful protection of the innocent; while even the dissolute god of revelry, to whom her song betrays her neighbourhood, is still more awed by her dignity than tempted by her beauty.

(Line 201.)

Comus. This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, conscience.
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith; white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel, girt with golden wings;
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme Good, t' whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,

To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my Brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy aëry shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
Oh, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness, till it smil'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;

But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan; by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle Shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

CHAPTER XII.

DRYDEN.

A.D. 1631–1700.

CONTEMPORARY with Milton, and in his own day enjoying a reputation hardly second to his, was John Dryden. He was a member of a knightly family in Northamptonshire, being the grandson of Sir Erasmus Dryden of Canon's Ashby in Northamptonshire, who was one of the first baronets created when James I. hit upon that singular method of replenishing his exchequer by inventing a new title for the purpose of putting it up to sale. He was born in 1631, and was educated at Westminster, and at Trinity College, Cambridge, as a scholar of which noble foundation he took his degree in 1653; and the next year, on the death of his father, who was the youngest son of the old baronet, he succeeded to a small estate, which, though not sufficient to render him independent, was enough, in his own opinion, to justify him in addicting himself to literature instead of following a more regular and lucrative profession. While a boy he had won the praise of the great headmaster of Westminster, Dr. Bushy, by the extreme facility and elegance of his poetical translations from the classics; and at Cambridge he had distinguished himself less pleasantly by another kind of poetry, in which he was destined afterwards to reap pre-eminent fame: satire, which involved him in a quarrel with a young nobleman, from which he did not extricate himself without some discredit. But these early productions of his muse have perished; and the first of his poems which has come down to us, which is probably, also, the first that he ever published, gave little indication of his future career, though it supplies but too clear a proof of his utter want of steadiness to any principle, political or

religious, which was his besetting fault throughout his life. His nearest relations, his uncle Sir John Dryden, and his cousin Gilbert Pickering were both zealous Puritans, and warm admirers of Cromwell. With Sir Gilbert Pickering he is understood to have lived for some time as a secretary, and by him he seems to have been imbued with such a belief in the durability of the usurper's dynasty, that, after his death, he published a panegyric on him, which he entitled 'Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Protector,' and which was generally admitted to be the best poem which the subject had elicited, though the veteran Waller was one of his rivals.

But he soon found out that he had been mistaken in his anticipations; Charles II. recovered his throne amid the acclamations of the nation, and Dryden hastened to efface the recollection of his eulogies of the departed tyrant by an equally elaborate prediction of the glories and blessings which were to be showered over the land through the restoration of the king, whom Astræa Redux, 'Returning Justice,' was leading back to his country. His prophetic praise of the Sovereign who was to betray the interests of his kingdom to Louis XIV., and to sacrifice the lives of subjects whom he knew to be innocent to the perjuries of Titus Oates, was not much better justified than his glorification of the man who had massacred, not only the garrison, but the unarmed inhabitants of Drogheda and Wexford in cold blood, and had sold hundreds of Englishmen to work as slaves in the West Indies for no offence but that of having fought for their king.

However, his wit and his flattery gained him the favour not only of the Merry Monarch, but probably led to his being appointed, in 1662, one of the Fellows of the newly-constituted Royal Society, an honour which, as Scott fairly points out, 'is an evidence of the respect in which his talents were already held,' and which was very fairly deserved by his learning, which was both extensive and accurate, though not of a scientific character. He became the author of numerous small poems, addresses to great men, songs and prologues, training himself for some more elaborate work, and labouring especially to purify

English poetry of the false metaphysical wit which had been in fashion during the earlier part of the century, and polishing its measures into a greater regularity and smoothness; and at last, in 1666, he celebrated the exploits of Prince Rupert and the Duke of Albemarle in the naval campaign of the preceding year, in a poem written in the four-line stanza, to which he gave the name of 'Annus Mirabilis, the Year of Wonders,' and which Hallam has praised as probably the best poem which had as yet been produced in the language: though I think myself that the frequent instances of bad taste with which it abounds, and of which the friendly critic admits the existence, disentitle it to a praise which would put it above the minor poems of Shakespeare and Milton.

Work of this kind, however, was not very profitable. The age of Charles II. was not a reading age; and the sale of 'Paradise Lost' is a proof how little booksellers could afford to pay for copyrights; but (partly, perhaps, because the Puritans had denounced all theatres as hotbeds of iniquity and all abomination) it was eminently a playgoing age; and the author of a successful play was entitled to very considerable payments from the managers. Dryden, therefore, very soon betook himself to dramatic composition, pouring forth tragedies and comedies with unexampled rapidity, and greatly adding to both his reputation and his income by their popularity; though they did not escape severe criticism, which he provoked by the jealous temper which he at all times displayed towards all whom he considered as his competitors for the public applause. He wrote in rhyme, in compliance with the fancy of the king, whose taste, during his exile on the Continent, had been formed on the French models; but, though that practice is at variance with the modern idea of the kind of verse most suitable to the drama, it is by no means the sole or even the chief reason why his plays have fallen into oblivion. Many of them contain bold, impetuous characters, into whose mouths he has occasionally put fine, spirited pasages; but his genius was essentially undramatic; he had no skill in embodying character, nor in delineating the passions: he had great knowledge and keen perception, but neither feeling

nor sympathy with feeling. The Duke of Buckingham, who had taken under his patronage a wretched poet named Elkanah Settle, whose plays Dryden in consequence attacked with a malignity which did more dishonour to himself than to Settle, in revenge satirised Dryden as Bayes in the 'Rehearsal,' a farce of some ability, which afterwards suggested to Sheridan his inimitable 'Critic;' and the 'Rehearsal' is better known than any of the works which it held up to ridicule. One of his comedies he dedicated to Charles's especial favourite, the Earl of Rochester, who, however did not always regard him with the good-will which he must have entertained for him when he accepted the dedication; for, when in 1679 the poet offended the Duchess of Portsmouth by some lines in his 'Essay on Satire,' Rochester sent a gang of ruffians to waylay him, who beat him so severely that for some time it was a question whether his life was not in danger.

By this time he had relinquished the stage, and had begun to divide his attention between satire, which of all poetry seems to have been most in accordance with the real bent of his genius, and translations from the classics, for which the publishers were more inclined to pay; and in 1681 he came out with the satire which is deservedly accounted the finest production of his genius, 'Absalom and Achitophel.' He had succeeded Sir John Davenant as poet-laureate several years before, and he probably thought that his occupation of this post gave the Government a claim on his services in the extreme difficulties in which, in 1680 and 1681, it was placed by the intrigues of Monmouth and Shaftesbury; the Duke making almost royal progresses through different parts of the country, and Shaftesbury, his chief supporter and instigator, employing every means which the most unscrupulous ingenuity could suggest to raise a party to espouse his pretensions to the throne, which he knew to have no other foundation than imposture and perjury. To put the imposture in its true light, and to expose the characters of those who were Monmouth's chief abettors, seemed almost a duty of the poet-laureate; and as the chiefs among them happened to be the very men whom Dryden had the greatest reason to regard as his

personal enemies, it was one with which pleasure was not unmingled. The poet was a sufficiently shrewd courtier to deal gently with Monmouth himself, whom he knew to be his father's favourite son, and for whom, therefore, he presaged a return of his tenderness when his present irritation should have passed away: but he made up for his mercy towards him by his delineations of Shaftesbury, as Achitophel, and Buckingham as Zimri, whom he has handed down to posterity stamped with a reputation and ridicule which will never die, adding subsequently a second part, in which he condescended to brand some of the contemporary poets such as Settle and Shadwell, as 'Og' and 'Doeg' exerting for their exposure a genius from which it is impossible to withhold an admiration, but displaying at the same time a bitterness of temper which, when we consider the insignificance of the objects, it is impossible not to lament.

'Absalom and Achitophel' was not his only attack on Shaftesbury; a second, the 'Medal,' which is said to have been suggested to him by the king himself, was intended to ridicule the zeal of the arch-intriguer's friends, who, when the grand jury of London had refused to find a true bill on the charge of high treason which the law-officers of the Crown had brought against him, struck a medal in his honour with the sun emerging from a cloud, the date of the rejection of the bill, and the motto 'Lætamur' on the reverse; Shaftesbury's own head and name being on the other side. In a thorough and scathing exposure of Shaftesbury's whole career, which was its object, the 'Medal' exceeded the previous satire; in the vigour and elegance of the poetry it equalled it, and was regarded, both by friends and foes, as a work which was of real service to the Crown in the strange contest which was now being maintained. But neither these nor any others of his works had done much to enrich the poet. In one of them he is said indeed to have received 100*l.* from the king; but, besides his estate, the value of which did not exceed 60*l.* a year, his sole permanent dependence was his salary as poet-laureate, and that was very irregularly paid. A letter from him to Lord Rochester has been preserved, in which, in a very pathetic though not unmanly tone, he entreats

that nobleman, as one of the chief ministers, to allow at least half of his salary for the year to be paid him at once; and to bestow on him some more lucrative post, either in the Customs or Excise, or some other department. He does not set his hopes high; 'he only thinks he merits not to starve; and pleads for what is his due only to enable him to support 'his three sons, growing up to man's estate;' whom 'he has bred up to learning, beyond his fortune; but they are too hopeful to be neglected, though he wants.' We are allowed to infer from passages in some of his subsequent writings that, though his application for some additional office was unsuccessful, his salary was henceforth paid with greater regularity. Another of his satires, 'Mac Flecknoe,' which may be looked upon as the model for Pope's more celebrated 'Dunciad,' was a bitter, semi-burlesque attack on Settle, Shadwell, and the other contemporary writers of little merit who had in different ways, even by their success, excited his jealousy and ill-will. But a poem which he published in 1682, with the somewhat unpoetical title of 'Religio Laici,' deserves to be read with greater attention, from the light which it throws on his subsequent adoption of the Roman Catholic religion, which, as his conversion took place in the first year of the reign of the Roman Catholic king James II., has almost invariably, and not unnaturally, been regarded as an unprincipled apostasy, prompted by no more respectable motive than the wish of obtaining the royal favour. But Scott, analysing the 'Religio Laici,' and a subsequent poem 'The Hind and Panther,' which he wrote on the difference between the Church of England, personified as the Panther, and the Romish Religion, portrayed as the Milk-white Hind, shows that in his earlier years Dryden had been not a convinced and attached son of the Church of England, but a waverer, inclined by reason to scepticism, though discontented with himself for entertaining doubts on subjects of such importance; and sighing for an 'Omniscient Church'[1] which should lay down the law on all such disputable and difficult matters with an authority which should compel his obedience. Such an authority he fancied that he had found in the

[1] Religio Laici, v. 285.

pretensions of the Church of Rome; and this phantom led him, as it has led others who have studied the question far more deeply, to decide on embracing a creed which (as even his friendly critic admits) was probably not the less recommended to him by the prospect of royal patronage which it opened to him.

In this last expectation, however, he was painfully disappointed. The notions of absolute power which James engrafted on his theological opinions led even those who had been foremost in refusing to exclude a Roman Catholic from the throne, to be equally zealous in driving from it one whose acts proved that he looked on popery as authorising tyranny, and who, claiming to hold his authority of divine right, looked on all the liberties of the nation as dependent solely on his own absolute will; and one of the consequences of the Revolution which ensued led to all who professed the fallen sovereign's religion being deprived of their offices. Dryden, in consequence, ceased to be poet-laureate, though the Earl of Dorset, the lord chamberlain, a great patron of learned men, and himself not without merit as a poet, generously continued to pay him out of his own pocket the salary of which his official duty had compelled him to deprive him.

His dismissal from the laureateship was the more mortifying to him that it was bestowed on Shadwell, whom he had so constantly disparaged and vilified; but in some respects it was not unfortunate, since it drove him to apply himself to kinds of poetry which he had not previously tried, and to which he owes no small portion of his present fame. His genius was in no degree dimmed, nor his industry abated by advancing years. And though he was now nearly sixty years of age, he poured forth work after work during the last ten years of his life with a rapidity and profusion which, when their excellence is also taken into account, may be considered almost marvellous. He had always kept up the classical scholarship with which he had been imbued by Dr. Busby, and now he conceived the idea of rendering the great poets of antiquity better known to his countrymen by a series of poetical translations of Juvenal, Persius, parts of Ovid and of Homer, which he

prefaced by prose introductions, in which he discusses the various kinds of poetry and the different styles of those whom he was translating with an acuteness of discernment and elegance of language which has induced Johnson to ascribe to him the honour of being 'the father of English criticism;' and, encouraged by the success these minor attempts met with, he undertook the translation of the whole of Virgil, which he published in 1697, and which is, beyond dispute, the noblest work of the kind ever produced in any language. It is pleasant to be able to add that it placed him in easy circumstances; he received for it, at the lowest computation, more than 1,200*l.*, a sum which, though very inadequate to its merit, or to his labour, was nevertheless far larger than had been gained as yet by any literary undertaking in the world. And it was hardly finished when he began to think of doing the same office for Homer which he had done for his Roman imitator. He translated the first book, and found 'the blind old man,' as he wrote to Lord Halifax, 'a poet more according to his genius than Virgil, and consequently one whom he hoped to do more justice to in his fiery way of writing.' But he postponed it for a time, and did not live to resume it. That for any work in which 'fire' was required he was qualified above all other men, he gave ample evidence in the noble ode on 'Alexander's Feast,' which he wrote in 1698, finishing it in a single night. Nearly forty years afterwards it was set to music worthy of it by the great Handel; but it had not to wait till that time to have its excellence universally acknowledged. Dryden himself ventured to affirm that 'a nobler ode never had been produced, and never would be.' And the great modern poet, to whose biography of him I have been frequently indebted in this sketch, comments thus upon the boast: 'This singularly strong expression cannot be placed to the score of vanity. It was an inward consciousness of merit which burst forth, probably almost involuntarily, and, I fear, must be admitted, as prophetic.'

But the task for which Dryden laid aside the 'Iliad' was the clothing in a modern and an English dress some of Chaucer's tales, which the obsoleteness of their original

language had rendered long unintelligible; and selections from Boccaccio's 'Decameron.' They were published in 1699 in a single volume, to which he gave the name of 'Fables,' and are distinguished by all his characteristic excellences: animation of description, propriety of expression, varied harmony of rhythm, and (what was perhaps less to be expected in works avowedly taken from others) fertility of invention, in so high a degree that they are unanimously reckoned his masterpieces. They were his last works. He was revolving the idea of translating Homer, which, in intention at least, he had only laid aside for a while, when an attack of erysipelas, neglected or unskilfully treated, produced a mortification in his foot, of which, on May 1, 1700, he died, 'taking of his friends,' as one of them has recorded, 'so tender and obliging a farewell as none but he himself could have expressed.'

His death procured him a greater recognition of his merits than he had received during his life. By the influence of Lord Halifax and other admirers of his genius, he was honoured with a public funeral in Westminster Abbey, where

> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well,

and where a tablet, erected in the next generation by the celebrated Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, bears the name of 'Dryden' alone, as if no laboured epitaph could do equal justice to the most brilliant of the many men of genius who make the 'Poets' Corner' in that noble cathedral its most interesting spot.

> In Santa Croce's sacred precincts lie
> Ashes which make it holier.

Yet the last years of the old poet's active life had not been without honour and comfort. It is a pleasing picture that has been preserved of him, sitting of an afternoon at Will's Coffee House, in the arm-chair in the chimney-corner, which all reserved for him, and round which all the scholars of the day, and all who could appreciate, or who wished to be thought able to appreciate learning and genius, collected, gathering up with respectful attention the bits of criticism,

the jests, the repartees, and occasionally the solid, spontaneous reflections which dropped from his lips. He had faults of temper; he had for enemies most of the contemporary authors, and we fear, it must be admitted, he had deserved their enmity by his jealous carpings at all whom any portion of the public ever regarded with any degree of favour; but it must be allowed, as some palliation of his bitterness, that they deserved his scorn by the wretchedness of their productions; and some praise must be given to the man who, in an age when servility was so general, had courage to dare the hostility of nobles as powerful and unscrupulous as Shaftesbury and Buckingham. It must be added that, in a licentious age, his life was eminently correct and free from reproach; and even had his errors been far greater than they were, much might be forgiven to one to whom our language is so deeply indebted.

For, though there have been disputes about his character, provoked probably, by his conversion to popery, his literary merits have been admitted with complete unanimity. Johnson, in a more than usually elaborate criticism, has instituted a comparison between him and Pope; giving him, though not without hesitation, the praise of superior genius and energy; but allowing, on the other hand, that he was so inferior to Pope in industry that, though he has produced finer passages, he has completed no entire poem of greater excellence, for Dryden was easily satisfied with what he had done; Pope was never contented as long as he thought it possible to improve his work. If I wished to show Dryden's merit by any comparison, I would rather place his works by the side of those of Donne, Andrew Marvel, and others of his immediate predecessors, whose verses, though highly popular in their day, are so absolutely destitute of rhythm and harmony that it might be supposed that, in their idea, all that was needed to distinguish poetry from prose was the recurrence, at stated intervals, of some more or less correct rhyme; and I would point to the vast improvement produced in a single lifetime both in melody of versification and in purity of expression as examples of what English literature owes to Dryden. But all comparisons are apt to lead to injustice to one party;

and Dryden has sufficient claims to our admiration without its being necessary to elevate him by the disparagement of any other poet in any quality. They are founded on his extensive knowledge, his sound judgment, his masculine sense, his lively wit, his shrewd though too often sarcastic humour, his great fertility of fancy, set off by an almost unvarying propriety of language, by great energy, or, as he would himself have called it, fire of description and illustration, in which he excels so much that, even to what in most hands would be dry and tedious, passages of grave disquisition, of political or theological argument, he can lend a vividness and animation which carries us along with him; and by a mastery over both regular and irregular metre such that we owe to him not only the introduction of the regular ten-syllable line which in the next century Pope (who gloried in being his disciple) polished and refined till he led readers to think that, if it were faulty, the fault lay only in its being susceptible of such regular sweetness as to become monotonous; but also the proof, in his unrivalled ode on 'St. Cecilia's Day,' how nearly, in its richness, variety, and adaptability to every change of feeling and expression, the language of England approaches that of Greece.

Our first extract is from one of the fables which he remodelled, or, as he called it, translated from Chaucer. And in the appendix to this section the original passage is also given, that the student may be able to compare the two, and to judge how greatly Dryden improved upon the work of the earlier poet.

(Palamon and Arcite, book i.)

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once, 'twas on the morn of cheerful May,
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen
Than the fair lily on the flowery green,
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,
For with the rosy colour strove her hue,
Wak'd, as her custom was, before the day,
To do th' observance due to sprightly May:
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard sleep;

Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves;
Inspires new flames, revives extinguished loves.
In this remembrance, Emily, ere day
Arose, and dress'd herself in rich array;
Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair,
Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair;
A riband did the braided tresses bind,
The rest was loose, and wanton'd in the wind:
Aurora had but newly chas'd the night,
And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,
When to the garden walk she took her way,
To sport and trip along in cool of day,
And offer maiden vows in honour of the May.
At every turn she made a little stand,
And thrust among the thorns her lily hand
To draw the rose, and every rose she drew
She shook the stalk, and brush'd away the dew:
Then party-colour'd flowers of white and red
She wove, to make a garland for her head;
This done she sung and carolled out so clear,
That men and angels might rejoice to hear;
Ev'n wondering Philomel forgot to sing,
And learned from her to welcome in the spring.

In the next extract, from the same poem, he has lavished all the riches of his imagination on the description of the decorations of the gates and towers. If any fault could be found with the magnificence of the passage, it could only be that the poet has been too prodigal of ornament; just as it has been objected that the work of Vulcan which Homer describes never could have been contained on a shield of a size to be borne by mortal man. But such objections are hypercritical. In judging of such a description we do not measure the surface of the wall, but the extent of the poet's imagination. If it be the poet's gift to turn to shape the forms of things unknown, he must clearly also have a right to determine the possibility of combining them within the space which his imagination assigns to them.

Eastward was built a gate of marble white;
The like adorn'd the western opposite.
A nobler object than this fabric was,
Rome never saw, nor of so vast a space:

For, rich with spoils of many a conquer'd land,
All arts and artists Theseus could command:
Who sold for hire, or wrought for better fame;
The master-painters and the carvers came.
So rose within the compass of the year
An age's work, a glorious theatre.
Then o'er its eastern gate was rais'd above
A temple, sacred to the Queen of Love;
An altar stood below; on either hand
A priest with roses crown'd, who held a myrtle wand.
The dome of Mars was on the gate appos'd,
And on the north a turret was inclos'd,
Within the wall of alabaster white,
And crimson coral for the Queen of Night,
Who takes in sylvan sports her chaste delight.
Within these oratories might you see
Rich carvings, portraitures, and imagery:
Where every figure to the life express'd
The godhead's power to whom it was address'd.
In Venus' temple on the sides were seen
The broken slumbers of enamour'd men,
Prayers that even spoke, and pity seem'd to call,
And issuing sighs that smok'd along the wall.
Complaints, and hot desires, the lover's hell,
And scalding tears that wore a channel where they fell:
And all around were nuptial bonds, the ties
Of love's assurance, and a train of lies,
That, made in lust, conclude in perjuries.
Beauty, and youth, and wealth, and luxury,
And sprightly hope, and short-enduring joy;
And sorceries to raise th' infernal powers,
And sigils fram'd in planetary hours:
Expense, and after-thought, and idle care,
And doubts of motley hue, and dark despair;
Suspicions, and fantastical surmise,
And jealousy suffus'd, with jaundice in her eyes,
Discolouring all she view'd, in tawny dress'd;
Down-look'd, and with a cuckoo on her fist,
Oppos'd to her, on t'other side advance
The costly feast, the carol, and the dance,
Minstrels and music, poetry and play,
And balls by night, and tournaments by day.
All these were painted on the wall, and more;
With acts and monuments of time before:

And others added by prophetic doom,
And lovers yet unborn, and loves to come:
For there th' Idalian mount, and Citheron,
The court of Venus was in colours drawn:
Before the palace gate in careless dress,
And loose array, sat portress Idleness;
There, by the fount, Narcissus pin'd alone;
There Samson was: with wiser Solomon,
And all the mighty names by love undone.
Medea's charms were there, Circean feasts,
With bowls that turned enamour'd youths to beasts.
Here might be seen that beauty, wealth, and wit,
And prowess to the power of love submit:
The spreading snare for all mankind is laid;
And lovers all betray, and are betray'd.
The goddess' self some noble hand had wrought;
Smiling she seem'd, and full of pleasing thought:
From Ocean as she first began to rise,
And smooth'd the ruffled seas, and clear'd the skies;
She trod the brine, all bare below the breast,
And the green waves but ill conceal'd the rest;
A lute she held; and on her head was seen
A wreath of roses red, and myrtle green;
Her turtles fann'd the buxom air above;
And by his mother, stood an infant Love,
With wings unfledg'd; his eyes were banded o'er,
His hands a bow, his back a quiver bore,
Supplied with arrows bright and keen, a deadly store.
But in the dome of mighty Mars the red
With different figures all the sides were spread;
This temple, less in form, with equal grace,
Was imitative of the first in Thrace:
For that cold region was the lov'd abode
And sovereign mansion of the warrior god.
The landscape was a forest wide and bare,
Where neither beast nor humankind repair;
The fowl, that scent afar, the borders fly,
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky;
A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
And prickly stubs instead of trees are found,
Or woods with knots, and knares deform'd and old,
Headless the most, and hideous to behold,
A rattling tempest through the branches went,
That stripp'd them bare, and one sole way they bent.

Heaven froze above, severe the clouds congeal,
And through the crystal vault appeared the standing hail.
Such was the face without; a mountain stood
Threatening from high, and overlook'd the wood;
Beneath the low'ring brow, and on a bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent.
The frame of burnish'd steel, that cast a glare,
From far, and seem'd to thaw the freezing air.
A straight long entry to the temple led,
Blind with high walls, and horror overhead;
Thence issued such a blast and hollow roar
As threaten'd from the hinge to heave the door;
In through that door a northern light there shone.
'Twas all it had, for windows there were none,
The gate was adamant, eternal frame!
Which hew'd by Mars himself, from Indian quarries came,
The labour of a god; and all along
Tough iron plates were clench'd to make it strong.
A ton about was every pillar there;
A polish'd mirror shone not half so clear.
There saw I how the secret felon wrought,
And treason labouring in the traitor's thought.
And midwife Time the ripen'd plot to murder brought.
There the red anger dar'd the pallid fear;
Next stood hypocrisy, with holy leer,
Soft smiling and demurely looking down,
But hid the dagger underneath the gown;
Th' assassinating wife, the household fiend,
And, far the blackest there, the traitor friend.
On t' other side there stood destruction bare,
Unpunish'd rapine, and a waste of war,
Contest, with sharpen'd knives, in cloisters drawn,
And all with blood bespread the holy lawn.
Loud menaces were heard, and foul disgrace,
And bawling infamy, in language base,
Till sense was lost in sound, and silence fled the place;
The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
The gore congeal'd was clotted in his hair;
With eyes half clos'd and gaping mouth he lay,
And grim as when he breath'd his sullen soul away.
In midst of all the dome, Misfortune sate,
And gloomy Discontent, and fell Debate,
And Madness laughing in his ireful mood,
And arm'd complaint on theft, and cries of blood,

There was the murder'd corpse in covert laid,
And violent death in thousand shapes display'd,
The city to the soldiers' rage resign'd:
Successless wars, and poverty behind;
Ships burnt in sight, or forc'd on rocky shores,
And the rash hunter strangled by the boars:
The new-born babe, by nurses overlaid;
And the cook caught within the raging fire he made,
All ills of Mars's nature, flame and steel;
The gasping charioteer, beneath the wheel
Of his own car; the ruin'd house that falls
And intercepts her lord betwixt the walls:
The whole division that to Mars pertains,
All trades of death that deal in steel for gains
Were there; the butcher, armourer, and smith,
Who forges sharpen'd faulchions, or the scythe.
The scarlet conquest on a tower was plac'd,
With shouts and soldiers' acclamations grac'd;
A pointed sword hung threat'ning o'er his head,
Sustain'd but by a slender twine of thread.
There saw I Mars's ides, the capitol,
The seer in vain foretelling Cæsar's fall,
The last triumvirs and the wars they move,
And Antony, who lost the world for love.
These, and a thousand more, the fane adorn;
Their fates were painted ere the men were born,
All copied from the heavens, and ruling force
Of the red star, in his revolving course.
The form of Mars high on a chariot stood,
All sheath'd in arms, and gruffly look'd the god;
Two geomantic figures were display'd
Above his head, a warrior and a maid;
One when direct, and one when retrograde.

Dryden's energy and fire can hardly better be seen than in his account of a combat; which is also selected for the opportunity which it affords of comparing his genius in that respect with that of the two great poets of the present century, Scott and Byron, both of whom have exerted their genius in descriptions of similar events, as will be seen presently.

The heralds last retired, and loudly cry'd,
'The fortune of the field be fairly try'd.'

At this, the challenger, with fierce defy,
His trumpet sounds; the challenged makes reply:
With clangour rings the field, resounds the vaulted sky.
Their vizors clos'd, their lances in the rest,
Or at the helmet pointed, or the crest,
They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,
And, spurring, see decrease the middle space.
A cloud of smoke envelopes either host,
And all at once the combatants are lost:
Darkling they join adverse, and shock unseen,
Coursers with coursers jostling, men with men:
As labouring in eclipse, awhile they stay,
Till the next blast of wind restores the day.
They look anew: the beauteous form of fight
Is changed and war appears a grisly sight:
Two troops in fair array one moment show'd;
The next, a field with fallen bodies strow'd:
Not half the number in their seats are found;
But men and steeds lie grovelling on the ground,
The points of spears are stuck within the shield;
The steeds without their riders scour the field.
The knights, unhors'd, on foot renew the fight,
The glittering faulchions cast a gleaming light;
Hauberks and helms are hew'd with many a wound,
Out spins the streaming blood, and dyes the ground;
The mighty maces with such haste descend,
They break the bones, and make the solid armour bend.
This thrusts amid the throng with furious force;
Down goes at once the horseman and the horse;
The courser stumbles on the fallen steed,
And floundering throws the rider o'er his head.
One rolls along, a football to his foes,
One with a broken truncheon deals his blows.
This halting, this disabled with his wound,
In triumph led, is to the pillar bound,
Where by the king's award he must abide:
There goes a captive led on t'other side.
By fits they cease, and, leaning on the lance,
Take breath awhile, and to new fight advance.
Full oft the rivals met, and neither spar'd
His utmost force, and each forgot to ward.
The head of this was to the saddle bent,
The other backward to the crupper sent;

Both were by turns unhors'd; the jealous blows
Fall thick and heavy, when on foot they close.
So, deep their faulchions bite, that every stroke
Pierc'd to the quick; and equal wounds they gave and took.
Borne far asunder by the tides of men,
Like adamant and steel they met again.
So when a tiger sucks the bullock's blood,
A famish'd lion, issuing from the wood,
Roars lordly fierce, and challenges the food.
Each claims possession, neither will obey,
But both their paws are fasten'd on the prey;
They bite, they tear, and while in vain they strive,
The swains come arm'd between, and both to distance drive.

Satire was with Dryden a very favourite exertion of his genius. His greatest satire is undoubtedly 'Absalom and Achitophel,' Achitophel being meant for the Earl of Shaftesbury. In the first edition he poured forth all his indignation on this 'troubler of the State' without any counterbalancing eulogy. In the second, for some reason which is not entirely clear, he sought to counteract or soften his censure by the addition of a panegyric on his exercise of his judicial authority, which Lord Campbell, in his 'Lives of the Chancellors,' declares to have been wholly undeserved.

(Absalom and Achitophel.)

Of these the false Achitophel was first,
A name to all succeeding ages curst;
For close designs and wicked counsels fit,
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless, unfix'd in principles and place,
In power unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er inform'd the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity:
Pleased with the danger when the waves went high,
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
Great wits are, sure, to madness near ally'd,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?

Punish a body which he could not please,
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
And all to leave what with his toil he won,
To that unfeather'd two-legg'd thing, a son,
Got while his soul did huddled notions try,
And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
In friendship false, implacable in hate;
Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the state.
To compass this, the triple bond he broke;
The pillars of the public safety shook,
And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke.
Then, seiz'd with fear, yet still affecting fame,
Usurp'd a patriot's all-atoning name.
So easy still it proves in factious times,
With public zeal to cancel private crimes.
How safe is treason, and how sacred ill,
Where none can sin against the people's will;
Where crowds can wink, and no offence be known,
Since in another's guilt they find their own?
Yet fame deserv'd no enemy can grudge,
The statesman we abhor, but praise the judge;
In Israel's courts ne'er sat an Abethdin
With more discerning eyes, or hands more clean,
Unbrib'd, unsought, the wretched to redress:
Swift of despatch, and easy of access.
Oh! had he been content to serve the crown,
With virtues only proper to the gown;
Or, had the rankness of the soil been freed
From cockle, that oppress'd the noble seed,
David for him his tuneful harp had strung,
And heaven had wanted one immortal song.

Whether his praise of Shaftesbury were deserved or not, there can be no question that the admiration which the following lines express of the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom) was wholly unwarranted.

Auspicious prince, at whose nativity
Some royal planet rul'd the southern sky,
Thy longing country's darling and desire;
Their cloudy pillar, and their guardian fire;
Their second Moses, whose extended wand
Divides the seas, and shews the promised land;
Whose dawning day, in every distant age,
Has exercis'd the sacred prophet's rage;

The people's prayer, the glad diviner's theme,
The young man's vision, and the old man's dream?
Thee, saviour, thee the nation's vows confess,
And, never satisfied with seeing, bless:
Swift unbespoken pomps thy steps proclaim,
And stammering babes are taught to lisp thy name.
How long wilt thou the general joy detain,
Starve and defraud the people of thy reign;
Content ingloriously to pass thy days,
Like one of virtue's fools that feed on praise;
Till thy fresh glories, which now shine so bright,
Grow stale and tarnish with our daily sight?
Believe me, royal youth, thy fruit must be,
Or gathered ripe or rot upon the tree.
Heaven has to all allotted, soon or late,
Some lucky revolution of their fate;
Whose motions, if we watch and guide with skill,
For human good depends on human will,
Our fortune rolls as from a smooth descent,
And from the first impression takes the bent;
But, if unseized, she glides away like wind,
And leaves repenting folly far behind.
Now, now she meets you with a glorious prize,
And spreads her locks before you as she flies.

Zimri was the Duke of Buckingham, a man satirised by Pope also, who, however, not being stimulated by the remembrance of personal injuries or affronts, as Dryden was (for Buckingham's play of the 'Rehearsal' had been written for the express purpose of ridiculing him), is less severe, and uses his example only to point a moral, sparing his vices, and lamenting rather than vituperating his follies.

Some of their chiefs were princes of the land,
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand;
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts, and nothing long,
But, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon,
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy,
Railing, and praising, were his usual themes;
And both, to shew his judgment, in extremes:
So over-violent, or over-civil,
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art,
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laughed himself from court; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief;
For, spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel;
Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left.

CHAPTER XIII.

POPE.

A.D. 1688—1744.

FROM Dryden we naturally pass on to Pope, not only in obedience to chronology, but because he is generally looked on as the poet who continued and completed the work which Dryden had begun, the perfecting of the versification and harmony of the ten-syllable rhyming couplet. It was a light in which he wished to be regarded, as he avowedly took Dryden for his model; and, as Ovid had seen Virgil,[1] though that was all that he could say, so Pope had seen Dryden, having, even as a child, conceived such an admiration of him that he induced a friend of his father to take him to Will's coffee-house, where in his later years the old poet sat in state, as it were, receiving the homage of his friends, which included everyone who desired to be regarded as a wit or a scholar.

It was a singular direction for the enthusiasm of so young a boy to take, for Dryden died when Pope was only twelve years old. But Pope's infirmity of constitution debarred him from the sports more natural to his age, and confined him to study. And his selection of Dryden as the special object of his admiration is a proof of a soundness of critical judgment even more rare than his early addiction to literature.

He was born May 22, 1688, just at the time when James II. was crowning his violation of the constitutional rights of his people by his insane prosecution of the bishops. Had he succeeded, it might have affected the fortunes of the child in after life, for his parents were rigid Roman Catholics, and his own adherence to the same form of religion was, as

[1] Virgilium vidi tantum, nec avara Tibullo
Tempus amicitiæ fata dedere meæ.

matters turned out, a great bar to his advancement. His father is generally said to have been a linendraper, though Johnson seems to discredit the story, saying that 'the rank or station of his parents was never ascertained,' but that they were certainly 'of gentle blood.' But he also quotes a remark, which he had heard made, that Pope, in his maturer years, seemed more willing to say what his father had not been than what he had, and adds that 'it is allowed that he had got rich by trade.' Whatever he had been, about the time of the poet's birth he quitted London, and retired to Binfield, a pretty village in Windsor Forest, where he was careful to give his son as good an education as could be procured in the neighbourhood, which, however, consisted in engaging a Popish priest to be his occasional tutor, from whose instruction he obtained a fair acquaintance with Latin, but very little with Greek, and some knowledge also of French and Italian. But his favourite study was the poetry of his own country, especially the works of Waller and Dryden. And at a very early age he began to show his familiarity with both them and the Romans of the Augustan era, imitating Dryden in modernising some of Chaucer's poems, and making elaborate translations from Ovid before he was fifteen. They are works of remarkable merit for a boy; and were followed the next year by a volume of Pastorals. His father, according to the account which in after life he gave of his boyhood, used to encourage and take pride in his precocity, often suggesting subjects for his poetical efforts; but he also represented his own inclination for composition as so innate and irrepressible as to need no such stimulus. Ovid had recorded that in his childhood everything he attempted to write naturally fell into verse, and, in what seems like a translation of the Roman's confession,[1] or boast, Pope declares—

> While still a child, a stranger yet to fame,
> I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.

[1] Sæpe Pater dixit studium quid inutile tentas?
Mæonides nullas ipse reliquit opes.
Sponte suâ numeros carmen veniebat ad aptos,
Et quod tentabam scribere versus erat.

He did not publish his 'Pastorals,' or indeed any of his works, till some years after their composition; but they were shown in manuscript to many of the most celebrated and influential writers of the day. A statesman of some eminence in his generation, Sir W. Trumball, who had been ambassador at Constantinople, on retiring from public life, settled near Binfield, and, taking a fancy to the precocious cleverness of young Pope, introduced him to Wycherley, the lively author of the 'Plain Dealer,' who distinguished him for a time with special favour, writing verses in his praise, which were instantly circulated among the fashionable world. He even showed Pope some poems of his own, and invited his comments on them, a display of friendship which led to its speedy dissolution; for Wycherley was a careless writer; while Pope was a born critic, who, young as he was, had already settled in his own mind that correctness was the most indispensable of qualities in any composition. He found fault and suggested corrections, and Wycherley, in high displeasure at the disrespect thus shown him by a mere boy, broke off the intimacy, though, according to Johnson, Pope always retained a regard for his old friend, and after a time prevailed on him to renew the friendship. Meantime Wycherley's praises had recommended him to the acquaintance of other literary men, which he extended by frequenting the coffee-house which even after Dryden's death retained its celebrity as their favourite place of meeting. He became known to Swift and Addison, who both conceived a high esteem for his talents. And it is creditable to his judgment that the praise of men so distinguished never led him to neglect that perseverance in study which could alone enable him to retain their good opinion. He was an indefatigable reader, changing his subjects and objects as he grew older, but never abating his industry. The account given by himself of his studies was, that from fourteen to twenty he read for amusement, desiring only to know; from twenty to twenty-seven he read for instruction, endeavouring to learn to judge.

But even before, according to this statement, he had begun to learn to judge, he had undertaken not only to form, but to pronounce judgment. For he had already

written 'The Essay on Criticism,' which Johnson has praised with a warmth which amounts to extravagance, and which, were it really deserved, would lead us to infer that criticism is an art of more pretension than real value, if excellence in it be so independent of maturity of intellect as to be attainable by a youth of less than twenty years of age. It is said that Pope originally wrote it in prose (which Dryden had chosen as the vehicle for his own masterly criticisms), and that the clothing of his notions on the subject in verse was a subsequent idea, dictated, perhaps, by the example of Boileau, and still more by that of two noble and fashionable authors in our own country, Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, and Lord Roscommon, who had written poetical essays on satire, and on translated verse, and both of whom he warmly compliments in his own work. Years after its publication Lady Mary Wortley declared it was 'all stolen,' a charge so far true that it probably contains few maxims which had not been inculcated by earlier writers. But, whether original or not, it was received with very general favour. Addison extolled it in the 'Spectator'; Antony Hamilton translated it into French, and it laid the foundation of his reputation with the public, which was fully established three years afterwards by the 'Rape of the Lock.'

The 'Rape of the Lock' may be pronounced his masterpiece. His own description of it on the title-page, as a heroi-comical poem, scarcely gives an adequate idea of the poet's pre-eminent richness in all the qualities which the lighter Muses can bestow on their votaries. Exuberance of fancy, elegance of diction, musical sweetness of rhythm, grace of sentiment, cultivated and refined wit, are not more conspicuous in any poem in our own, nor, as far as I am aware, in any other language, ancient or modern. Nor is there any on the merits of which critics have been more unanimous. On its first appearance it was received with enthusiastic applause, and with the exception of his inveterate enemy, John Dennis, I do not know anyone who has attempted to disturb the general verdict.

He was now, though only twenty-four, at the very

height of literary fame. As a Roman Catholic, he was inclined to Toryism in politics, and was cordially received, I might almost say courted, by the principal writers on that side, by Swift and Arbuthnot, and even by their patron, Bolingbroke, while, as we have already seen, he was almost equally intimate with Addison, the chief writer among the Whigs. And he availed himself of his universal popularity to put forth proposals for a work of great magnitude, though not original, which he designed to publish by subscription, a favourite mode in those days, and from which he expected a large profit. It was the translation of the greatest of all poems, the 'Iliad' of Homer into English verse. Translations from the classics were so fashionable in that day that there had been few poets during the preceding century who had not attempted that species of composition. Dryden, as we have seen, had not only translated the whole of Virgil, but had afterwards contemplated the 'Iliad' also, and had published the first book, professing to look on Homer's genius as more akin to his own than that of Virgil, but doing far less justice to the great Greek. One might suppose that all that he meant was that the 'Iliad' was more simple, less elaborate, less carefully polished than the 'Æneid,' and that, therefore, in translating it, he might, with less blame, indulge his own careless indolence, and save himself the trouble of refining his language or correcting his versification. Pope's offer, therefore, fell in with the prevailing taste. Swift and others of his friends took up the idea with fervour, canvassing for subscriptions for him. Though the price was greater than had ever been obtained for any literary work before, six guineas a copy, it soon became apparent that the poet's expectations would be greatly exceeded by the real returns. In fact, as he boasted afterwards, with excusable pride, the profits of the work rendered him independent for life. And it cannot be denied that the success it met with was deserved. He devoted five years to the work, and, numerous as have been the translations of the same poem since his day, it remains unapproachable, not only in poetical excellence, but in fidelity to the author, the point in which it might have been the more expected to

fail, since Pope notoriously knew little if any Greek. But it was successful beyond the author's warmest expectations. Even the scholars who disparaged it at its first appearance as a rendering of Homer, like Bentley, who told Pope himself that he must not call it Homer, admitted, like him also, that it was 'a pretty poem.' Its beauty, as such, was of course more highly appreciated by those who were less able to compare it with the original: the great majority of readers. The demand for it was so great that it was pirated in Holland: the first English book, I believe, that ever was so treated; and that it should have been worth while to perpetrate such a piece of roguery, if a great loss to the publisher, was a great compliment to the author. The one drawback to his success was that it lost him the friendship of Addison. A great deal of warm advocacy has been spent on the question who was most in fault; but it seems plain that Addison gave the provocation. The *genus irritabile vatum* has passed into a proverb, and no doubt both were men of jealous tempers; while to Addison's vexation at finding that one so much younger than himself had superseded him in the general opinion as the literary dictator of the day, was added political difference, which just at this time was unusually bitter. Stories are told of wranglings between them and mutual reproaches a year or two before; but the quarrel was rendered irreconcileable when, two days after the publication of the first volume of Pope's 'Iliad,' a rival translation came out by Tickell, a friend of Addison, in which Addison himself was believed to have had a considerable share, and which, at all events, he took every opportunity of extolling above Pope's. He so little succeeded in inducing the public at large to agree with him, that Tickell did not find it worth his while to proceed with his task, while Pope was encouraged by the success of his translation to follow it up with proposals for translating the 'Odyssey,' of which, however, he only did a part, many of the books being the work of Fenton and Broome, whom he took as colleagues in the undertaking, Broome being the scholar to whom he is believed to have been indebted for most of the notes in the 'Iliad.' As I am only speaking of Pope as a poet, I should not think it

necessary to mention his edition of Shakespeare, which he undertook at the same time that the 'Odyssey' was proceeding, were it not that it is connected in some degree with his celebrated satire, the 'Dunciad,' since the writer whom in the first edition he enthroned as King of the Dunces was Theobald, whose real crime, as Johnson says, was that he had 'revised Shakespeare more happily than himself.' Nor shall I stop to discuss the satire itself. It is, no doubt, as a work of art, among the most brilliant of his productions; but, unless those attacked are men in whose characters, for good or evil, posterity takes an interest, few satires command attention after the occasion which has provoked them has passed by. And the main object of the 'Dunciad' is to prove that those whom it condemns as deserving oblivion never ought to have attracted notice. When, in the course of the poem, Pope took upon himself to decide on the merits not only of British versifiers, but of classical scholars, and ranked the great author of the 'Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris' beneath the editor of those clumsy forgeries, he exposed his own presumption in taking on himself to pronounce an authoritative decision on matters in which he had not sufficient knowledge to enable him even to form an opinion. The 'Dunciad' was published in 1729, but before he began it he had been planning, and no doubt in part composing, the work which is more known at the present day, with the exception, perhaps, of the 'Rape of the Lock,' than any of his other writings; the 'Essay on Man;' and in 1732 he published the first book, anonymously, as he did the second and third, fearing, according to Johnson, the criticism of the crowd of writers whom he had provoked by the 'Dunciad,' and hoping, while the work was not known to be his, to entrap them into praises which they would be unable afterwards to recant. It was not till the fourth and last book came out that he avowed himself to be the author, and inscribed it to Bolingbroke, to whose suggestion he owed the idea of the undertaking, with many of the principles laid down in the poem. Bolingbroke had returned from exile a few years before, and had at once renewed his intimacy with the poet, whose fame had by this time reached such a

height that he was caressed, it would hardly be too much to say courted, by the leaders of all parties, not only by him and other Tories, such as the daring and eccentric Peterborough, of whose friendship he boasts with excusable pride, coupling them together in one of his earlier imitations of Horace:

> Then St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul;
> And he, whose lightning pierc'd the Ibnian lines,
> Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines,
> Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain
> Almost as quickly as he conquered Spain:[1]

but by the minister also whom they regarded as their implacable enemy, and who generally cared but little for literature or art; the great Sir Robert Walpole; but who admitted him to the intimacy of

> his happiest hour
> Of social pleasure, ill exchanged for power;

and himself presented the 'Dunciad' to the King and Queen. Indeed, the list of men whom in the Epilogue to the Satires Pope enumerates as those whom

> he long had lov'd, nor lov'd in vain,
> Rank'd with their friends, not numbered with their train,[2]

comprises nearly all the names of the highest reputation in the kingdom during the first half of the last century. Johnson mentions a report that Bolingbroke, an avowed sceptic, in private ridiculed Pope for having adopted his advice; as having, in consequence, in the poem 'advanced principles of which he did not perceive the consequences, and as blindly propagated opinions contrary to his own.' This, if true, would be the severest condemnation conceivable: it is countenanced a little by the circumstance that one or two lines in the first edition did involve a denial, or at least, a disparagement of the wisdom of the Almighty, as the Creator of the universe, which in later editions were altered. And it may well be that Pope did not fully discern all the conclusions to which his arguments might lead,

[1] Sat. I. v. 127. [2] Epilogue, ii. 90.

since his mind was hardly of that accurate cast which is suited to carry on a profound philosophical investigation. He tells us himself, in his preface, that he might have discussed the subject in prose, but he chose verse; partly because he found he could express his maxims 'more shortly' in verse than in prose; and also because when 'so written, they both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards.' The object implied in this latter has been, to a great extent, answered. As an argumentative work indeed the poem is probably never referred to or consulted. But the illustrations, of exquisite beauty, which are lavished so prodigally on every part of the poem, are still read, re-read, and quoted as frequently as any verses in the language; the perfection of separate parts is allowed to make up for any defects which the poem shows as a whole, and deservedly constitutes it one of the most enduring pillars of his great fame.

All his later works are of a similar kind. The four 'Moral Essays' are, as it were, a second part of the 'Essay on Man,' in which the maxims laid down are enforced by a more express reference to real, sometimes to living characters, than in the more important work. The 'Imitations of Horace' greatly resemble the Essays. Rochester had set the example of imitating one of Horace's Satires, and giving them new point by the application to modern instances; and Bolingbroke suggested to Pope the idea of imitating his example. The same plan, at almost the same moment, had occurred to Johnson, as yet unknown, and seeking any subject for his pen by which he might hope to earn a livelihood; and, singularly enough, 'London,' his imitation of Juvenal's third Satire, came out the very same morning on which Pope's imitations of Horace were published. They of course display no original genius, but are admirable as works of art; while the prologue and epilogue have higher merit; and contain some of the most powerful delineations of personal character, whether friendly or satirical, that ever came from his pen.

Of his 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' I shall speak when I come to compare it with Dryden's, in our examination of

lyric poetry in general. And his other works, being of inferior importance, scarcely require special notice. And for the same reason we may pass over his prose writings, though many of his squibs, such as the 'Life of Martinus Scriblerus,' and his treatise 'On the Art of Sinking in Poetry,' display a lively humour. His health had always been delicate, and in May 1744 he died, after a short illness, at the age of fifty-six, evincing (though he had never shown any special regard for religion in his life) a desire to die in union with the Romish Church, and sending for a priest to administer to him the last sacraments: a proceeding at which Bolingbroke professed to be greatly scandalised, though, to all appearance, he was sincere in his sorrow for his loss, and in the eulogy which he passed upon him, that he had 'never known a man who had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or a more general friendship for mankind.' His private character has been discussed with a warmth almost amounting to acrimony, almost within the recollection of the present generation; one writer, while editing his works, doing his best to fix on him the imputations of malignity and treachery; while Byron, in a warm vindication of him, strove, on the other hand, to represent him as nearly faultless in temper and disposition. His constant panegyrics on Dryden, and confession of his superiority, may be allowed to prove that, though jealous of living rivals, he was not envious of well-deserved fame. But it is not quite so easy to believe his assertion that in his 'Moral Essays' no character was taken from real life; nor to acquit him of ingratitude in selecting, as the objects of his covert attacks, more than one person to whom he was under obligations which ought to have disarmed his hostility. On his merit as a poet there is less difference of opinion. Johnson, in an examination of it so masterly as to leave succeeding critics little to do but to copy or abridge it, affirms the 'constituent and fundamental principle of his intellect to be good sense, a prompt and intuitive perception of consonance and propriety.' To this he adds, 'genius, a mind active, ambitious, and adventurous;' and, comparing him with Dryden, while he allows the elder poet a richer fancy, a greater degree of 'poetical vigour,'

or, in other words, a loftier natural genius, he assigns to Pope the superiority in workmanship, and denies that Dryden's are the better poems. 'If,' he says, 'the flights of Dryden are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing; if of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. If Dryden often surpasses expectation, Pope never falls below it. If Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, Pope is read with perpetual delight.' And in another part of his criticism we find a sentence which explains why, in spite of an inferiority of natural powers which he discerns in Pope, he yet places the works of the two in an equal rank; and which marks Pope out in an especial degree as the best of models for the youthful student: 'Pope was not content to satisfy: he desired to excel; and therefore he always endeavoured to do his best.'

The following extract contains the greater part of the second canto of the 'Rape of the Lock,' than which none of his works more completely justify the verdict of Johnson that, even if Dryden's natural gifts were of a higher order, he has not produced more perfect poems. It may be doubted whether Dryden was capable of giving such delicate touches as those with which Pope has embellished his portrait of the lady, or the sprightly playfulness with which the voyage of 'the painted vessel' is described; while the duties of the sylphs and sylphids are expounded by their chief with an impressive dignity very appropriate to the title he himself gave the poem, of heroi-comical.

Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purple main,
Than issuing forth, the rival of his beams,
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair nymphs and well-drest youths around her shone,
But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends,
Oft she rejects but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.

Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles have faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget them all.
This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
Th' adventurous Baron the bright locks admir'd;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toils attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.
For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious heav'n, and every pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes,
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The Pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
The rest the winds dispers'd in empty air.
But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides:
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And soften'd sounds along the waters die;
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.
All but the Sylph, with careful thoughts opprest,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons straight his denizens of air,
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair;
Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the train beneath.

Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While ev'ry beam new transient colour flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior by the head, was Ariel plac'd;
His purple pinions op'ning to the sun,
He rais'd his azure wand, and thus begun:—
Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear,
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Demons, hear!
Ye know the spheres, and various tasks assign'd,
By laws eternal, to th' aërial kind.
Some in the fields of purest ether play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
Some, less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light,
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
Others, on earth, o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of nations own,
And guard with arms divine the British Throne.
Our humble province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing though less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows, ere they drop in show'rs,
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay, oft in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.
This day, black omens threat the brightest fair
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care,

Some dire disaster, or by force or slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapped in night.
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour, or her new brocade,
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade:
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball,
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.
Haste then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

The observations on the 'Essay on Man' contained in the biographical sketch are borne out by the extreme beauty of the following passage:—

(Essay on Man, I. 77.)

Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescrib'd, their present state;
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know,
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.
Oh, blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruins hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.
Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher Death; and God adore.
What future bliss, He gives not thee to know,
But gives that Hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest.[1]

[1] We may compare with this the following passage from Pope's most successful disciple of the present century: Campbell.

What potent spirit guides the raptur'd eye
To pierce the shades of dim futurity?

The soul (uneasy and confin'd) from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.
Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul proud Science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple Nature to his hope has giv'n
Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth of woods embrac'd,
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To be, contents his natural desire;
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

The following passage is that to which allusion was made on presenting Dryden's portrait of Zimri.

(Moral Essays, Epistle iii. 299.)

In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
The floors of plaster, and the walls of dung,
On once a flock-bed, but repair'd with straw,
With tape-tied curtains, never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed,
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies,—alas! how changed from him,
That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim!
Gallant and gay in Cliefden's proud alcove,
The bow'r of wanton Shrewsbury and love;
Or just as gay at Council, in a ring
Of mimic statesmen, and their merry king.
No wit to flatter, left of all his store!
No fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
There, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
And fame; this lord of useless thousands ends.

Can Wisdom lend, with all her heav'nly power,
The pledge of Joy's anticipated hour?
Ah no! she darkly sees the fate of man,
Her dim horizon bounded to a span;
Or, if she hold an image to the view,
'Tis nature painted too severely true.
With thee, sweet Hope, resides the heav'nly light,
That pours remotest rapture on the sight.

Pleasures of Hope, i, 24.

The following exquisite portrait of a perfect woman is believed to have been meant for Mrs. Martha Blount.

(Moral Essays, Epistle i. 256.)

Oh! blest with temper whose unclouded ray
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day;
She who can love a sister's charms, or hear
Sighs for a daughter with unwounded ear;
She who ne'er answers till her husband cools,
Or, if she rules him, never shews she rules;
Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humour most when she obeys;
Let fops or fortune fly which way they will;
Disdains all loss of tickets, or codille;
Spleen, vapours, or small-pox, above them all,
And mistress of herself, though china fall.
And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at best a contradiction still.
Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last best work, but forms a softer man;
Picks from each sex to make the fav'rite blest,
Your love of pleasure, our desire of rest:
Blends, in exception to all gen'ral rules,
Your taste of follies, with our scorn of fools;
Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,
Courage with softness, modesty with pride
Fix'd principles, with fancy ever new;
Shakes altogether, and produces—You.

GOLDSMITH.

Of Goldsmith's life we have spoken under the head of the dramatists. The poems to which the following extracts belong are both, as we have said, believed to have been drawn mainly from his own experiences. The character given of the French is as remarkable for its nice discrimination and sound judgment as for its poetry. The portrait of the vicar in the second extract is generally understood to be meant for the poet's own father.

(The Traveller, v. 239.)

To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
I turn; and France displays her bright domain.

Gay, sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleas'd with thyself, whom all the world can please,
How often have I led thy sportive choir,
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire!
Where shading elms along the margin grew,
And, freshen'd from the wave, the zephyr flew;
And haply, though my harsh touch falt'ring still,
But mock'd all tune, and marr'd the dancer's skill;
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance, forgetful of the noon-tide hour,
Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
And the gay grandsire, skill'd in gestic lore,
Has frisk'd beneath the burden of threescore.

So blest a life these thoughtless realms display,
Thus idly busy rolls their world away:
Theirs are those arts that mind to mind endear,
For honour forms the social temper here.
Honour, that praise which real merit gains,
Or e'en imaginary worth obtains,
Here passes current; paid from hand to hand,
It shifts in splendid traffic round the land;
From courts to camps, to cottages it strays,
And all are taught an avarice of praise;
They please, are pleas'd; they give to get esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.

But while this softer art their bliss supplies,
It gives their follies also room to rise;
For praise too dearly lov'd, or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought;
And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
Leans for all pleasure on another's breast.
Hence ostentation here, with tawdry art,
Pants for the vulgar praise which fools impart;
Here vanity assumes her pert grimace,
And trims her robes of frieze with copper lace;
Here beggar pride defrauds her daily cheer,
To boast one splendid banquet once a year;
The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.

(The Deserted Village, v. 137.)

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild,

There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had chang'd, nor wish'd to change his place;
Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learnt to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain;
The long-remember'd beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
The broken soldier, kindly bid to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were won,
Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way.[1]

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismay'd,
The reverend champion stood. At his controul,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;

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[1] Goldsmith is not perhaps very likely to have been a student of Chaucer, but there is a remarkable similarity between this line and one in the older poet's description of the 'pore persoun.'

> But Criste's lore and his apostles twelve,
> He taught, and ferst he followed it himselve.
> *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, 528.

Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.
At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
E'en children follow'd with endearing wile
And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleas'd him, and their cares distrest;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

CHAPTER XIV.

WORDSWORTH.

A.D. 1770—1850.

GOLDSMITH was evidently a pupil of the school of Pope. But towards the end of the century there sprang up a band of writers who made a parade of their contempt for every poet since Milton; and showed, as far as their own practice went, that they did not hold even the author of 'Paradise Lost' in very high esteem. The first years of the present century produced other poets of greater power than those already alluded to, who partly agreed with them, in their works departing as widely as they from the examples of Dryden and Pope; but who partly differed from them, inasmuch as they professed and sincerely entertained the highest respect for the genius of the old bards, and even acknowledged the inferiority of their own works to theirs, and their own perversity in departing from such models.

Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor,

was the spirit in which Byron spoke of Pope's poems and his own; while Scott devoted many of his most industrious hours to a careful edition of and criticism on Dryden's works, and a minute and most elaborate biography of the poet himself. I design to speak of all those to whom I have here alluded, taking first those who first came before the public as authors, the poets of the Lake School as they are commonly called; though no more absurd misnomer was ever given, for instead of forming a school, an expression which clearly implies a close resemblance between the men, or at least between their works, there never were three writers more entirely different from each other in the frame and structure of their minds, or in the

style of their composition, than Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, the friends who, sixty years ago, were classed together under this designation.

We will take Wordsworth first, not so much because he was the eldest, though he was so by a year or two; nor as the first in genius and poetical power, for in those qualities he was probably inferior to one, if not to both of his friends; but because, in another point of view, I look on him as the most important of the three at the present day, as having influenced in a far greater degree the style of the poets of the present generation, or, at all events, that of the most fashionable of them, Tennyson, his successor in the post of poet-laureate. His life, as is that of most men wholly given up to literature, was so uneventful as to afford a biographer little more to relate than the names of his works. He was the son of a Cumberland attorney, whose chief business was the agency to a part of Lord Lonsdale's estates. He was educated at one of the small grammar-schools of the county, where, apparently, very little pains were taken with the education of the pupils in school-hours, and no care whatever was devoted to them at other times. They learnt but little Latin and Greek (and in those days nothing else was ever taught), and they roved about the country wherever they pleased when they were not learning: a training, if it can be so called, which was less injurious to him than it would be to most boys, and which probably contributed to give him that keen insight into and relish for the beauties of creation which are the peculiar and most attractive features of his poetry, and to which he mainly owes his reputation. When he was fourteen he lost his father: his mother had been dead some years; and, being left to the guardianship of her brothers, his only near relatives, one of whom was a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, he was entered there at eighteen, and remained there till he took his degree in 1791, spending his last long vacation in a walking tour through France, which he repeated the next year, making a long sojourn in the country for the purpose of learning the language. This he accomplished to a certain extent; but, unluckily, he became at the same time in-

fected with the revolutionary mania then raging in that country, which was not quenched in his mind even by the horrors of the September massacres. Before the end of 1792 he returned home, and the next year embarked in the career which he pursued unceasingly to the end of his days, publishing a very small volume of poems, part of which had been written in the first year of his Cambridge life.[1] In the judgment of most of his friends, they showed very little power, or even originality; the most remarkable thing about them being perhaps the complete difference which they prove between his idea at that time what poetry should be, and the system which he afterwards proclaimed; for the longer poem, 'Descriptive Sketches taken during a Pedestrian Tour among the Alps,' is a manifest imitation of Goldsmith's 'Traveller.' Yet something in them struck a young aspirant after fame in the same field, who afterwards became his warm friend and most enthusiastic admirer: Coleridge, who, to quote his own words, saw in the language, which he thought 'peculiar and strong,' and in the 'novelty and struggling crowd of images,' 'the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon.' He conceived an earnest desire for the writer's acquaintance; and at last, when it seemed unlikely to be attained in any other way, he paid him a visit at a little cottage in Dorsetshire, where Wordsworth was living, with a sister, who kept house for him. They soon returned his visit; he was living in an equally humble way in Somersetshire, and the friendship thus formed led to a poetical partnership. They resolved on taking a trip together; and as both were nearly destitute of funds, they proposed to raise the necessary supplies by another volume of poems. By this time Wordsworth (though his original preparation for a poetical career had been mainly a study of the old English poets, especially Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton) had convinced himself that they and everyone else who had written verse in England were, to a certain extent, in a wrong track; or, at all events, that an equal effect might be produced by taking subjects of a different class,

[1] Biographia Literaria, i. 75.

describing matters of everyday life, and directing the attention to the loveliness and wonders of the ordinary world and common out-of-door nature. Coleridge appreciated his friend's ideas and aim, but conceived his own powers to lie in a different direction, in the 'portrayal of persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic;'[1] and, both apparently feeling that a volume containing specimens of each style would have a better chance of a favorable reception from the public than one confined to subjects of one class only, in 1798 they published a volume of 'Lyrical Ballads,' which, however, was nearly all Wordsworth's; Coleridge, who was at all times indolent, and, even when working, most desultory in his industry, contributing little more than one piece, short for a poem if long for a ballad, the 'Ancient Mariner.' For our present purpose, therefore, we may speak of the volume as Wordsworth's alone. It was at first but ill received; so ill that when, a few months afterwards, the publisher retired from business, and sold his copyrights, that of the 'Lyrical Ballads' was valued at 'nothing,' and returned to him. But when, a year or two afterwards, he republished them with the addition of a few more pieces from his own pen, though they were then accompanied by a preface which laid down some new principles of poetry which bore the appearance of a challenge to critics that some of them were not slow to take up, they rose in popularity. In truth the volume was a type of all his subsequent works, alike in its beauties and in its faults. It contained some poems marked by exquisite pathos, and bursts of natural feeling admirably expressed. with others, trivial, and puerile in the last degree. There is certainly no poet in our language, probably none in any, in estimating whose talent it is more necessary to bear constantly in mind the rule which I ventured to lay down at the beginning of this volume, that the standard by which we estimate the genius of the poet differs from that by which we judge of the excellence of his work; since, in measuring the former, we have regard chiefly to the height to which he at times rises, and avert our eyes, as far as possible, from the depths to which he occasionally sinks. That

[1] Biographia Literaria, ii. 2.

Wordsworth should often sink to depths to which none of his predecessors had descended was inseparable from his system, even as he himself explained it. In the preface above-mentioned, he declared his object to be to choose his 'incidents and situations from common life,' from 'humble and rustic life,' and to adopt the language of men of that class of life, because, being less under the influence of vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions;' adding that, so far from 'what is usually called poetic diction being found in his volumes, as much pains had been taken to avoid it as is usually taken to produce it;' he wished, in short, to show, as he sums up his views, 'that the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry.' It was inevitable that poems composed on these principles should often be tame, trivial, and unattractive: it is almost surprising that they were not at times coarse and vulgar; but from such errors his instinctive purity kept him free: nor, severe as were the criticisms which the puerilities visible in every one of his publications provoked, did anyone ever accuse him of offending, either in idea or in expression, against the strictest rules of well-bred propriety. Indeed, the judgments passed on his works even by those who condemned his system most severely, were neither animated by an unfriendly spirit, nor ever failed to do justice to the real talent which was also discernible in them. Jeffrey, the editor of the 'Edinburgh Review,' was perhaps of all his reviewers the most earnest and the most powerful of those who denounced his successive volumes; and he is so far from denying the praise of high ability to the man, that he assigns as the principal reason for the zeal he shows in the condemnation of his works, his vexation at such 'perverseness and bad taste' being allowed to mar the effect which might have been produced by the 'genius and laudable feeling' which was equally conspicuous. And again, in a review of the 'Excursion' written several years later, he deplores 'the disproportion which exists between the author's taste and his genius, and the devotion with which he has sacrificed so many precious gifts at the shrine of his idols.' Scott also, who was a personal friend of the poet, expressed in a letter

a similar regret that he should so often 'choose to crawl on all fours when God had given him a noble countenance to lift up to heaven.'

But the evidences of candour and goodwill thus displayed had not the slightest influence in inducing him to amend the faults which such friendly critics pointed out. As a boy, he had been remarkable for wayward, wilful stubbornness in a singular degree, and he had preserved these qualities undiminished. If the critics disapproved of a single ballad, so much the worse for the critics. On the publication of one of his works, a lady whose husband had shown himself one of his most efficient, as well as most judicious friends, expressed her wishes for its success; but he replied that it was sure not to succeed, 'for the generation was stiff-necked, and would never bow down before him,' and of deferring to its opinions for a single moment, or in a single point, he had no notion. Even the desire of profit, though, till he was past forty, he was in painfully narrow circumstances, could not induce him to make the least attempt to humour the public. So limited was the sale of even his most popular volumes that, when he had been continually writing and publishing for more than twenty years, he found, on making the calculation, that in all that time he had received but little more than 100*l*. But he was contented not to sell; and so far was superior to Horace's philosopher [1] that he continued to applaud himself even when he had no money in his strongbox to testify that others coincided in the panegyric.[2]

[1] Horace's maxim rather was to postpone such obstinacy till he was rich:—

> Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
> Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.

[2] It was a graver fault than mingling poor poems with good ones, that he was himself a most uncandid judge of others, whether living or dead. A judicious and evidently friendly critic in the 'Quarterly Review' (Dec. 1852), to whose article the present writer is much indebted, admits that the harshest reviewer did him more justice than he was wont to deal out to his greatest contemporaries. His mind was not merely dead to their beauties and alive to their faults, but he sometimes indulged in an extravagance of censure that had no foundation whatever. . . . . Verses which stirred the most cultivated minds like the sound of

At last, when he was forty-one, fortune smiled on him, though in a most unpoetical way. Lord Lonsdale procured him the office of distributor of stamps for Westmoreland, which was worth above 500*l.* a-year. So that he could now devote himself more freely than ever to the task which he had set himself of teaching the world that its judgment of all the poetry which it had hitherto been wont to admire was wrong, and that he alone, for some generations at least, had understood and shown how poetry ought to be conceived and written. The only difference was that he now put forth his lessons at greater length. Up to this time he had only written short poems, sonnets, and odes; but in 1814 he published what, if it had been completed, would have been the longest poem ever written in any language: the 'Excursion,' in nine books, the whole being but 'a part of the second part of a long and laborious work,' which was to consist of three parts. Even had not inequality been the characteristic of all his works, this was likely to be unequal, since portions of it had been written twenty years before. And it was soon seen that, in this and other respects, it was thoroughly characteristic of him. In its weakest portions it was not much better than the worst of the 'Lyrical Ballads;' while the scale of the work exhibited another defect in his talents which had not been seen while he confined himself to short pieces. He was clearly destitute of the ability to plan an elaborate work, as is made plain by his own words in the preface in explanation of the apparent strangeness of publishing the middle of a poem before its beginning. He does so because 'this part does not depend upon the preceding to a degree which will materially injure its own peculiar interest.' Another and a heavier fault was its frequent obscurity: he raises questions on disputed doctrines, both of philosophy and religion, which need not have been mooted, but which, if they were, required clear and distinct answers. But his solutions of them are more mystical and unintelligible than

a trumpet, found no echo in his, because he was bound up in the thraldom of a system, that is, in the eternal contemplation of his own theories, as exemplified in his own performances.'

the difficulties themselves. And, if he was unconscious of the absurdity of putting long philosophical speeches designed to explain and enforce all his own peculiar doctrines and favourite principles into the mouth of a pedlar,[1] he certainly was the only man who was so. The rhythm too (the poem is in blank verse) was often very harsh, not probably from indifference on the subject, but from a want of ear which is apparent in most of his works. But at the same time, in its better parts, the 'Excursion' showed a great increase, and also a variety, of power which he had hardly displayed in any of his previous works, with a greater knowledge of the heart and the feelings. Some of the pictures of rustic life are distinguished by great delicacy; some are drawn with great force, and nearly all with subtle discrimination and truth. The next year he published the 'White Doe of Rylstone,' which is said in some respects to have been his own favourite among all his compositions. And perhaps the first canto has passages of descriptive beauty which may almost warrant the preference; but the story, which relates how a girl suddenly bereaved of father and mother could find no relief from her sorrow till a white doe fawned upon her, with a kind of living intelligence, when the caresses of the dumb animal healed the wound whose anguish neither time nor reason nor religion had been able to allay, is repugnant to common sense; while the closing incident, the doe's apotheosis, finds no echo in the reader's fancy, while it shocks his belief. In his preface to a later edition of the 'White Doe' he protests against his work being compared with Scott's, because, while 'Sir Walter pursued the customary and very natural course of conducting an action presenting various turns of fortune to some outstanding point on which the mind might rest as a termination or catastrophe,' his own course had been

[1] Even Coleridge, writing in the avowed character of a warm friend and champion, asks, 'Is there one word attributed to the pedlar in the "Excursion" characteristic of a pedlar?' (*Biog. Lit.* ii. 150). Wordsworth is said to have stated, in explanation of his choice of such a hero, that he has made him what he conceived that he himself should have been had he been placed in such a station of life.

wholly different. The heroine here knew that her duty was not to interfere with the current of events, either to forward or delay them; but to abide

> The shock, and finally secure
> O'er pain and grief a triumph pure;

and, even with respect to the most objectionable part of his plan, the apotheosis of the doe, while admitting it to be 'far too spiritual a catastrophe for instant or widely spread sympathy, he yet maintains that it is not on that account the less fitted to make a deep and permanent impression on independent minds.' The metre too required either a more vigorous hand, or a more musical ear to manage. It was that eight-syllabled verse of which, according to Byron, Scott alone had mastered 'the fatal facility,' till he himself in the 'Giaour,' parts of the 'Bride of Abydos' and one or two other poems, had shown himself equally competent to handle it; and it was bold in an inferior artist to commit himself to what looked like a challenge to such contemporaries. Yet, though for many years he continued his diligence, he never wrote so well afterwards. 'Peter Bell' and the 'Waggoner,' which he published five years later, were almost beyond the ingenuity of his friends to excuse, and the gems with which the volumes of miscellaneous poems, which he continued to publish for fourteen or fifteen years longer, occasionally sparkled, were of rarer occurrence and feebler lustre.

He lived to the age of eighty. On Southey's death, he had succeeded him as poet-laureate, but he was seventy-three before he received that honour, which certainly could not have been so fitly conferred on any living rival; and he was justified in looking on it rather as an acknowledgment of past services than as an incentive to fresh labours. In 1850 he died, a few days after his birth-day; and was buried at Grasmere, by the side of two of his children who had preceded him to the grave.

In the following passage from the 'Excursion,' which is a favorable specimen of his style, he evidently designs to present a portrait of himself and of his own mind:—

While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
So vividly great objects that they lay
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
Perplexed the bodily sense. He had received
A precious gift; for, as he grew in years,
With these impressions would he still compare
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms;
And, being still unsatisfied with aught
Of dimmer character, he thence attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye
On all things which the moving seasons brought
To feed such appetite—nor this alone
Appeased his yearning:—in the after day
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags,
He sate, and even in their fixed lineaments,
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression ever varying!

. . . . . .

In his heart,
Where Fear sate thus, a cherished visitant,
Was wanting yet the pure delight of love
By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,
Or by the silent looks of happy things,
Or flowing from the universal face
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
Of Nature, and already was prepared,
By his intense conceptions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.
Such was the boy—but for the growing Youth
What soul was his, when, from the naked top

Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him:—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love.
A herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes possessed.
Oh then how bright, how beautiful appeared
The written promise! Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life that cannot die;
But in the mountains did he feel his faith.
All things responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite, and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he saw.
What wonder if his being thus became
Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,
Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
Oft as he called those ecstacies to mind,
And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired
Wisdom, which works through patience; thence he learned
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought
To look on Nature with a humble heart,
Self-questioned where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

The passage which follows, explaining the principles which led the heathens to the strange mythological worship which even Socrates and Cicero could not venture to disown, is of a far higher class of poetry.

> The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,
> Rivers, and fertile plains, and sounding shores,
> Under a cope of sky more variable,
> Could find commodious place for every god,
> Promptly received, as prodigally brought
> From the surrounding countries, at the choice
> Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,
> As nicest observation furnished hints
> For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed
> On fluent operations a fixed shape;
> Metal or stone idolatrously served.
> And yet—triumphant o'er this pompous show
> Of art, this palpable array of sense,
> On every side encountered; in despite
> Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets
> By wandering Rhapsodists; and in contempt
> Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged
> Amid the wrangling schools—a spirit hung,
> Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,
> Statues and temples, and memorial tombs,
> And emanations were perceived; and acts
> Of immortality, in Nature's course,
> Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt
> As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed
> And armed warrior; and in every grove
> A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,
> When piety more awful had relaxed.
> 'Take, running river, take these locks of mine'—
> Thus would the Votary say—'this severed hair,
> My vow fulfilling do I here present,
> Thankful for my beloved child's return.
> Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,
> Thy murmurs heard; and drunk the crystal lymph
> With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,
> And all day long moisten these flowery fields!'
> And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed
> Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose
> Of life continuous, being unimpaired;
> That hath been, is, and where it was, and is

There shall endure,—existence unexposed
To the blind walk of mortal accident;
From diminution safe, and weakening age;
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays;
And countless generations of mankind
Depart, and leave no vestige where they trod.

There is an exquisite tenderness in the following passage, and the imaginative delicacy with which he expresses his delight in becoming a father may well make us regret, with his contemporary critics, that a perverse taste should so often have been allowed to mar such high gifts. It is a strong condemnation of his system that, while other poets lose rather than gain by the quotation of isolated passages from their works, such a plan leads to a far more favorable judgment of him than could be justified by an examination of any poem of his in its completeness:—

This fair Bride—
In the devotedness of youthful love,
Preferring me to parents, and the choir
Of gay companions, to the natal roof,
And all known places and familiar sights
(Resigned with sadness gently weighing down
Her trembling expectations, but no more
Than did to her due honour, and to me
Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime
In what I had to build upon)—this Bride,
Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led
To a low cottage in a sunny bay,
Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,
And the sea breeze as innocently breathes,
On Devon's leafy shores;—a sheltered hold,
In a soft clime encouraging the soil
To a luxuriant bounty!—As our steps
Approach the embowered abode—our chosen seat—
See rooted in the earth, her kindly bed,
The unendangered myrtle, decked with flowers,
Before the threshold stands to welcome us!
While in the flowering myrtle's neighbourhood,
Not overlooked, but courting no regard,
Those native plants, the holly and the yew,
Gave modest intimation to the mind
How willingly their aid they would unite
With the green myrtle, to endear the hours

Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.
Wild were the walks upon those lonely Downs
Track leading into track; how marked, how worn
Into bright verdure, between fern and gorse,
Winding away its never-ending line
On their smooth surface, evidence was none;
But, there, lay open to our daily haunt,
A range of unappropriated earth,
Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large;
Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld
The shining giver of the day diffuse
His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land
Gay as our spirits, free as our desires;
As our enjoyments, boundless.—From those heights
We dropped, at pleasure, into sylvan combs;
Where arbours of impenetrable shade,
And mossy seats, detained us side by side,
With hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts
'That all the grove, and all the day was ours.'
O happy time! still happier was at hand;
For Nature called my Partner to resign
Her share in the pure freedom of that life,
Enjoyed by us in common.—To my hope,
To my heart's wish, my tender Mate became
The thankful captive of maternal bonds;
And those wild paths were left to me alone.
There could I meditate on follies past;
And, like a weary voyager escaped
From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace
A course of vain delights, and thoughtless guilt,
And self-indulgence—without shame pursued.
There, undisturbed, could think of and could thank
Her whose submissive spirit was to me
Rule and restraint—my guardian—shall I say
That earthly Providence, whose guiding love
Within a port of rest had lodged me safe;
Safe from temptation and from danger far.

Of the 'White Doe of Rylstone' we have already spoken. Its prettiest passage is that with which it opens:

From Bolton's old monastic tower
The bells ring loud with gladsome power;
The sun shines bright, the fields are gay
With people in their best array

Of stole and doublet, hood and scarf,
Along the banks of crystal Wharf,
Through the vale retired and lowly,
Trooping to that summons holy.
And, up among the moorlands see,
What sprinklings of bright company!
Of lasses and of shepherd grooms,
That down the steep hills force their way,
Like cattle through the budded brooms;
Path, or no path, what care they?
And thus in joyous mood they hie
To Bolton's mouldering Priory.
What would they there? Full fifty years
That sumptuous pile, with all its peers,
Too harshly hath been doomed to taste
The bitterness of wrong and waste:
Its courts are ravaged; but the tower
Is standing with a voice of power,
That ancient voice which wont to call
To mass or some high festival;
And in the shattered fabric's heart
Remaineth one protected part;
A Chapel, like a wild-bird's nest,
Closely embowered and trimly drest;
And thither young and old repair,
This sabbath day for praise and prayer.
Fast the churchyard fills;—anon
Look again, and they all are gone,
The cluster round the porch, and the folk
Who sate in the shade of the Prior's Oak!
And scarcely have they disappeared
Ere the prelusive hymn is heard:—
With one consent the people rejoice,
Filling the church with a lofty voice!
They sing a service which they feel;
For 'tis the sunrise now of zeal;
Of a pure faith the vernal prime—
In great Eliza's golden time.
A moment ends the fervent din
And all is hushed without and within
For though the priest more tranquilly
Recites the holy liturgy,
The only voice which you can hear
Is the river murmuring near

When soft! the dusky trees between,
And down the path through the open green,
Where is no living thing to be seen;
And through yon gateway where is found,
Beneath the arch with ivy bound,
Free entrance to the churchyard ground—
Comes gliding in, with lovely gleam,
Comes gliding in, serene and slow,
Soft and silent as a dream,
A solitary Doe.
White she is as lily of June,
And beauteous as the silver moon
When out of sight the clouds are driven
And she is left alone in Heaven;
Or like a ship some gentle day
In sunshine sailing far away,
A glittering ship, that hath the plain
Of ocean for her own domain.

. . . . . .

What harmonious pensive changes
Wait upon her as she ranges
Round and through this pile of state
Overthrown and desolate!
Now a step or two her way
Leads through space of open day,
Where the enamoured sunny light
Brightens her that was so bright;
Now doth a delicate shadow fall,
Falls upon her like a breath,
From some lofty arch or wall,
As she passes underneath:
Now some gloomy nook partakes
Of the glory that she makes,—
High-ribb'd vault of stone, or cell,
With perfect cunning framed as well
Of stone, and ivy, and the spread
Of the elder's bushy head;
Some jealous and forbidding cell,
With perfect cunning framed as well,
Of stone, and ivy, and the spread
Of the elder's bushy head;
Some jealous and forbidding cell,
That doth the living stars repel,
And where no flower hath leave to dwell.

Sonnets are a class of composition of which he was especially fond. A poem limited to fourteen lines seems to cramp the genius in unnecessary fetters. But the date of that which follows, marking the close of the year in which Napoleon struck down Prussia, shows how completely he had overcome his early predilection for revolutionary principles, while it exhibits also a fine manly feeling of patriotic courage and self-reliance.

(Sonnet, November 29, 1806.)

Another year! another deadly blow!
Another mighty empire overthrown!
And we are left, or shall be left, alone;
The last that dare to struggle with the foe.
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!
We shall exult, if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And hònour which they do not understand.

CHAPTER XV.

COLERIDGE.

A.D. 1772–1834.

IF we regarded his works only, our mention of Coleridge would more properly be postponed till we come to the lyric poets; but in his lifetime he was so constantly associated with Wordsworth and Southey in the opinion of the public, that it seems better to speak of him here in connection with them.

If Southey be, as we shall presently see, the one of the poetical brotherhood of the Lakes who unquestionably did the most, Coleridge was the one, in the opinion of all their friends, who might have done the most, had any circumstances whatever been powerful enough to bind down his brilliant, profound, but most desultory genius to the steady application necessary for the successful prosecution of any pursuit, or the completion of any laborious task. In age he came between the two; being two years younger than Wordsworth, and as many older than Southey. He was the youngest of a large family, the son of the Vicar of Ottery, a small town in Devonshire, who combined with the living the mastership of the grammar-school which Henry VIII. had founded there. And there he would probably have received his education, had not his father died suddenly in 1781, when he was nine years old, on which his friends procured him a nomination to Christ's Hospital. In an autobiographical series of letters he relates that he was a timid boy, taking no delight in the ordinary sports of his schoolfellows, but a most incessant and indiscriminate reader. At eighteen he was removed to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself by gaining the gold medal for the Greek ode in his first year. But before he could take his degree he got disgusted with the University, and enlisted as a dragoon, a line of life for which

he was especially ill-qualified, as he could learn neither to ride nor to groom his horse; but his family soon bought his discharge and sent him back to Cambridge. He did not, however, take a degree. In fact, at that time he had learnt to entertain doubts on the teaching of the Church on certain points, and would not have signed the Thirty-nine Articles. And he was apparently hesitating what career to choose, when an acquaintance which, in the course of 1794, he made with Southey, then an undergraduate at Oxford, led to the formation of the wildest plan that was ever conceived by men of, not only ability, but common sense and right feeling. He, Southey, and one or two more men of the same age, formed what they called a pantisocratic society, on the principle of the abolition of all individual property; and, as they could not hope to be allowed to carry out these views, much less to obtain proselytes to them in England, they resolved to emigrate to the banks of the Susquehanna, where they expected better fortune. The very time of the intended emigration, March 1795, was fixed upon, and during the preceding autumn, the quartet (for the credit of common sense, I am glad to say, the society numbered only four members) applied themselves diligently to learning 'the theory and practice of agriculture and carpentry,' to fit them for their new mode of life. But before the spring Southey's heart failed him; his defection led to the renunciation of the project, of which the only permanent result was that Coleridge, as well as Southey, fell in love with the sisters of the wife of Mr. Lovell, who was one of the club; and, in October 1795, Coleridge married, and resolved to devote himself to literary composition; writing poems for pleasure and a magazine in which politics and literature were combined for profit. It was called the 'Watchman.' The politics were of the most revolutionary type, and he took a tour through the midland counties to obtain subscribers, in which object he was more successful than might have been expected, considering the extent to which he allowed his politics to interfere with his desire to puff his wares: as, when at Sheffield, on finding that the editor of a radical newspaper 'was in gaol for a libel on a bloody-minded magistrate,' he declined 'advertising or even dis-

posing of' the 'Watchman' in that town for fear of clashing with the interests of the amiable prisoner. On the other hand, he furthered his scheme in a somewhat novel manner by preaching in Unitarian chapels in a blue coat and white waistcoat, and giving the audience 'sermons preciously peppered with politics.' In later life he renounced both the political and religious views of his youth, becoming a sincere churchman and an earnest Tory. But his scheme failed. After a few numbers his subscribers fell off; one anonymous letter, which he preserved, in a great measure explaining the reason.

Sir,—I detest your principles: your prose I think very so-so; but your poetry is so beautiful that I take in your 'Watchman' solely on account of it. In justice therefore to me and some others of my stamp, I entreat you to give us more verse and less democratic scurrility.—Your admirer, not esteemer.

But he did not comply with his admirer's request, keeping most of his poems for separate publication, and publishing a volume of them in the course of the summer, which contained most of those which, in the collected edition of his works, are entitled 'Poems written in Youth.' One of these, called 'Religious Musings,' which seems to have been a peculiar favourite of his own, provoked criticism from some of his friends as being 'too metaphysical for common readers.' His reply, conceived quite in the same spirit as animated Wordsworth, was that 'it was not written for common readers;' but he differed from his friend in the candour with which he admitted, and the docility with which he corrected faults. He had ventured upon the manufacture of new words: *unshuddered, unaghasted,* meaning, I presume, not standing aghast, not terrified into shuddering, or perhaps not shuddered at. And such he admitted to be instances of vicious phraseology, and expunged them. But neither poetry nor politics paid; and, as it was indispensable that he should earn money, he began to revolve two plans in his mind: one, that of abjuring literature, and becoming a Dissenting minister; the other, that of perfecting himself in German, taking up his residence at Jena, where Schiller was living, translating all that great writer's works to support himself, while studying at the University in that

town; and, having finished that task, and acquired a sufficient knowledge of chemistry, anatomy, German theology and metaphysics, he proposed to return to England and open a school on an entirely novel system, but one which should make his 'scholars better senators than perhaps any one member in either House of Parliament.' Both those schemes, however, were abandoned, as were several others. He began to suffer from ill-health, which, with the remedies to which he had recourse for relief, his chief medicine being opium, gradually produced an effect on his nerves, which, to a certain extent, incapacitated him for settled, systematic work. It was probably the real cause of the scantiness of his contributions to the 'Lyrical Ballads' of which I spoke in my sketch of Wordsworth: and it certainly prevented his ever executing any work worthy of his great powers. Yet, a year or two later, he undertook an employment which, above all other talents, requires method, readiness, and a power of instantly applying the mind to any subject. He had always taken a keen interest in politics, and in 1799 he entered into an engagement with the editor of a London paper, the 'Morning Post,' to supply it with a daily article. When the editorship of the 'Post' passed into other hands, he made a similar engagement with the 'Courier.' And to both he contributed not only many prose articles far beyond the usual run of newspaper writing in that day, but many short poems; raising the character, and, it is believed, increasing the sale of the papers. But the work was wholly unsuited, if not to his talents, to his habits. He could not write to order; neither when he was wanted, nor what was wanted. One of the editors rated his abilities so highly that he declared that, as a writer of 'leading paragraphs, he would prefer him to Mackintosh, Burke, or any man he ever heard of.'[1] But he said, at the same time, that he 'never wrote a thing he was requested to write.' 'When he got into his study, if the printer's devil was not at his elbow hurrying him for "copy" he lost himself.' Still this kind of employment was his chief support for above ten years; varied by an occasional trip to other countries for the sake of his

[1] Biog. Lit. ii. 395.

health, and by other occupations, such as that of a lecturer, principally on literary subjects. He wrote a tragedy also, 'Remorse;' which, in 1813, was performed with great success at the time, though, I believe, it was never reproduced; and in fact, it is strange that it should have succeeded at all, for Coleridge's genius was far from being dramatic, and though it contains some fine passages, the plot is full of the wildest improbabilities. He succeeded better when he rendered Schiller's 'Wallenstein' into English, executing that translation with a skill which, as far as I know, is absolutely unequalled, and which presents the play to the English reader with all the vigour and effect of an original composition; with more, indeed, according to Walter Scott, than the original possessed.[1] In 1816 he published the poem which by many has been extolled as his most beautiful production, 'Christabel;' which had, indeed, been written many years before, and had been shown in portions to so many persons that the greatest expectations had been raised of it. It was known even to have had the honour of suggesting to Scott the metre for 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' But, when it was published as a whole, it certainly did not equal the expectations that had been formed of it, either in the music of its metre, or in the richness of its imaginative beauties. If Scott had taken the metre for a model, both he and Byron had far surpassed it in energy, in sweetness, and in variety, while some of the lines and even passages sank to the level of Wordsworth's most trivial ballads. The 'Sibylline Leaves,' which appeared the next year, contained some very pretty, tender ballads; but nothing of anything like first-rate excellence; nor, though he was not yet five-and-forty, did he ever afterwards produce anything of greater importance. He has been especially fortunate in one thing: in having his works edited by a son-in-law of rare abilities, too early cut off, and his memoir begun by him and completed by that son-in-law's wife, a woman in intellectual accomplishments worthy of her husband. And it is remarkable that she, writing of her father with a natural fondness and pride, fixes the year 1797 as that of his 'poetical

[1] Coleridge made Schiller's 'Wallenstein' far finer than he found it. *Lockhart's Life*, chap. xlii.

zenith,' apparently being contented to rest his fame as a poet on his 'Ancient Mariner,' a work which may, indeed, be wild and imaginative, but which seems to me greatly overrated when it is spoken of as not only the foundation of a great fame, but the superstructure also. Walter Scott, whose unrivalled genius could allow him to be candid to all his contemporaries, while his equally admirable disposition rendered him incapable of jealousy, much more of envy, characterises him as one whom fancy and diction would have placed above all his contemporaries, had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and steady will. For want of these qualities (a want probably greatly caused by constant infirmity of health), he certainly did nothing indeed worthy of his talents, nothing equal to the productions of very inferior men. He died in 1834.

The most perfect of his lyric poems is probably the little lyric of 'Geneviéve,' which tells a tale of love with extreme tenderness and simplicity.

(Geneviéve.)

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
Are all but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour
When midway on the mount I lay
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine stealing o'er the scene,
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Geneviéve!

She leaned against the armèd man,
The statue of the armèd knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope, my joy, my Geneviéve!
She loves me best whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story—
An old rude song that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
The lady of the land.

I told her how he pined; and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
And she forgave me that I gazed
Too fondly on her face.

But when I told the cruel scorn
Which crazed this bold and lovely knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
Nor rested day nor night;

But sometimes from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once,
In green and sunny glade,

There came and looked him in the face,
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a fiend,
This miserable knight!

And that, unknowing what he did,
He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved, from outrage worse than death,
The lady of the land;

And how she wept and clasped his knees,
And how she tended him in vain—
And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain.

And that she nursed him in a cave;
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest leaves,
A dying man he lay;

His dying words—but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense,
Had thrilled my guileless Geneviéve—
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng;
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued, and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love and virgin shame;
And like the murmur of a dream
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved, she stept aside;
As conscious of my look she stept—
Then suddenly, with timorous eye,
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace,
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel than see
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears; and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Geneviéve,
My bright and beauteous bride!

'Christabel,' though only a fragment, has a peculiar interest from having suggested to Scott the metre of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.' The following, which is the most celebrated passage, will show how close is the resemblance in the rhythm of the two poems, though Scott added a variety to it which Coleridge does not seem to have conceived. The metre, however, had often been used before. It is, when regular, the metre of Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' and also of the inimitable 'Hudibras.'

But when he heard the lady's tale
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Triermain.

It is remarkable, too, that this name is that of the hero of Scott's exquisite little poem, the 'Bridal of Triermain.'

Alas, they had been friends in youth,
But whispering tongues can poison truth,
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with one in love
Doth work like madness in the brain;
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline:
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother;
They parted,—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining;
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs that have been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between:—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,

Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful lord of Triermain
Came back upon his heart again.

SOUTHEY.

A.D. 1774–1843.

THE youngest of the triumvirate of the Lake poets was Southey, who was born in 1774. He was the lowliest born of the three, being the son of a Bristol linendraper; but, like Wordsworth, he was so fortunate as to have a maternal uncle who took an interest in his education, and who sent him to Westminster at fourteen, and to Balliol College, Oxford, at eighteen. But he gained little favour in the eyes of the authorities at school, as he had not had any proper or sufficient preparation beforehand, and still less at college, where, like his future friends, of whom I have already spoken, he took a wrong-headed delight in proclaiming his adherence to the most extreme doctrines of the French revolutionists. And finding himself, both by his political views, and also by his deficiency in accurate scholarship, debarred from all prospect of university distinction, he also betook himself to literature as an occupation, making a most ambitious beginning, and at the age of twenty publishing an epic poem in twelve books, on the subject of Joan of Arc, the most remarkable circumstances in connection with which are: first, that he wrote it in six weeks; and secondly, that it was favorably received, on account not so much of its poetical merits as of its republican sentiments, since, as he records in a preface to a subsequent republication of it, such opinions were at that time 'cherished by most of the critical journals,' and the eulogies of the reviewers raised for him a reputation which no condemnation by them of his later works could ever entirely demolish. Of his pantisocratic scheme we

have already spoken in our sketch of Coleridge. His democratic mania did not, however, last long. His uncle, who had a chaplaincy at Lisbon, persuaded him to accompany him to Portugal, hoping gradually to wean him from his mischievous opinions, and to induce him to enter his own profession. In a couple of years he was completely converted to Toryism, but preferred the bar to the Church, and on his return to England he entered himself at Gray's Inn as a student of law. But, though few men were ever blessed with a more industrious or resolute spirit, the study of statutes and cases was utterly distasteful to him. And when an old schoolfellow, who was possessed of a fair fortune, and who had a high idea of his talents and disposition, offered to settle an annuity on him, which, though small, was yet sufficient to relieve him from the necessity of working, as it were, for daily bread, he frankly accepted the kindness. And (with but one brief exception, when he accepted the post of secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, coupled with that of tutor to the minister's son; a combination of inconsistent employments for neither of which was he qualified, and which he threw up at the end of six months) he henceforth devoted himself wholly to literary composition, which, both in prose and verse, he poured forth with a rapid fertility which has never been equalled, save by his greater contemporary, Walter Scott. His publications were so numerous that it would be almost impossible even to give a complete list of them: epics, histories, translations from foreign poets, editions of English poets, essays, odes, biographies, and reviews, followed one another in uninterrupted succession. And if there was hardly one which was admired without qualification, there was not one which was not admitted to prove the possession by the author of very eminent abilities, enriched by most extensive reading. He could hardly have expected more indulgent treatment, for he was so far from any attempt to propitiate the critics that he rather went out of his way to provoke their hostility. Because, as it might almost seem, they agreed in looking on an epic poem as the greatest effort of poetical genius, he announced in his preface to 'Madoc' that that poem disdained that

'degraded title.' He placed as the motto to the 'Curse of Kehama':

> For I will for no man's pleasure
> Change a syllable or measure;
> Pedants shall not tie my strains
> To our antique poets' veins;
> Being born as free as these,
> I will sing as I shall please.

But they forebore to avenge themselves on him, and mingled with their condemnation of the defects and faults of his different poems a free admission of and even warm admiration for the great mental endowments of which they likewise saw evidence. I shall almost confine the extracts which I propose to subjoin to the two of his long poems which are generally considered the best: the 'Curse of Kehama' and 'Roderick, the last of the Goths': the one, a wild poem in irregular metre, on a subject drawn from the superstitions of the Hindoo mythology; the other, in blank verse, on the well-known story of the revenge taken by Count Julian of Spain for Roderick's licentious violation of his home, of the king's defeat on the plains of Xeres, and the establishment of the Moorish dominion in the Peninsula. No two subjects could well be more dissimilar in their character, or in the poet's treatment of them; for 'Roderick' was a systematic and regular narrative, founded on fact, 'Kehama,' a wild rhapsody, owing nearly everything to the imagination. But the very same beauties and faults were conspicuous, and equally conspicuous in both. Purity of sentiment and feeling, richness of imagination, great power of depicting the simple and innocent affections: these natural endowments being set off by the most ample learning, great copiousness and facility of diction, and, generally speaking, a great mastery of metrical sweetness: were the beauties. The faults were partly errors of taste. The writer's imagination labours too incessantly after effect to allow the reader those intervals of repose which the mind requires in order to appreciate the excellences presented to it. Every detail is worked up with an almost painful fulness, with an exaggerated minuteness, till the poems remind us of the efforts of a rhetorician aiming at an

artificial climax rather than of the spontaneous ease of a poet. They also arose partly from a deficiency in one or two qualities which, if of secondary magnitude in the genius of the writer, are of the very first importance as enabling him to interest the attention of the reader. Of that passion which generally constitutes so large an ingredient in all works of fiction, and deservedly, indeed necessarily so, if they would be true pictures of human life: of love, and the power of love, he seems either to have no conception, or else, on some mistaken principle, he abstains throughout from conveying any adequate impression. His heroines are as passionless as they are amiable; his heroes as indifferent to the softer feelings of love as to the baser emotions of fear. It is partly, perhaps, a consequence of this abstinence from what is so favourite a topic of all other poets, that he is also very defective in his exhibitions of variety of character, while his language, though copious, is rarely forcible, his sentences frequently by far too long; an error which has an inevitable tendency to obscure his meaning.

In 1813 the minister of the day, Lord Liverpool, gave him the office of poet-laureate, as twenty-one years afterwards another minister, Sir R. Peel, gave him a literary pension, and would have made him a baronet had not the scantiness of his fortune disinclined him to accept an honour which in some respects would have been expensive; and a few years earlier a third admirer had procured his return to parliament for a borough in which he had influence; but the laws requiring the possession of a certain quantity of freehold land from every member of the House of Commons were still in force, and Southey, by his want of such an estate, was prevented from taking his seat.

I have mentioned the entire change of his political views, which, however, was in no degree caused by the favour shown him by the Tory ministers; inasmuch as it took place long before he was known to them; but it was resented by some of the Radical party as if it had been the direct result of corruption, and they took a comical way of revenging themselves. They by some means obtained a copy of a play which he had written in his

youth at a time when his opinions were of the most Jacobinical character, and to which he had given the name of 'Wat Tyler,' and reprinted it in the hope of embroiling him with his patrons in office; but the malice, though full of annoyance to himself, was wholly ineffective. Nor did this revival of the recollection of his early follies excite the least distrust of the soundness and steadiness of his present patriotism.

'Roderick' was the last of his long poems, though he published some volumes of what he called minor poems afterwards; which, however, it is not necessary to notice more particularly, since, if, being in a simpler style, they are free from his most conspicuous faults, they are likewise, for the most part, devoid of his most striking excellences. But, though he still continued writing for full twenty years, he gradually almost confined himself to prose. Besides countless articles in reviews, chiefly in the 'Quarterly,' to which he was from its first establishment an unwearied contributor, he wrote a 'History of the Church,' for which the purity of his prose style secured a favour to which it was hardly entitled by its depth or accuracy of view; and a 'History of the Peninsular War,' which would have been better known if it had not had to encounter the competition of Colonel Napier, who, having been himself a distinguished soldier in Wellington's army, added to the inestimable advantage of a personal knowledge of many of the most striking incidents and most important achievements, a vigour of description and a mastery of appropriate language which no professional writer could surpass, and which very few have equalled. But among his prose writings one has defied rivalry, and he is probably better known by his 'Life of Nelson,' in two small volumes, skilfully expanded from a review of a more ponderous work, than by any of the poems which he himself ventured to compare to 'Paradise Lost.'

His end was a melancholy one. One of the greatest prose writers of the preceding century had

> Expired, a driveller and a show,

and Southey's fate was not more happy than Swift's. His

wife, who had been deranged for many years, died in 1837, and he had scarcely laid her in the grave when he himself fell into a state of mental imbecility. He was tended with affectionate care by his surviving relatives and friends. Miss Bowles, the daughter of the critic whose edition of Pope had provoked such indignant criticisms from Byron, sympathised with his affliction so deeply that she married him to acquire a right to nurse and comfort him. But no care or medical skill could avail him. Foreign travel was tried, but change of air produced no improvement in his health; change of scene brought no excitement to his mind; and in the spring of 1843 he died.

If we take a comparative view of the character of the poetry of the three friends together, we may probably think that Wordsworth is too subjective: that he wants energy, life, and lifelikeness. No one has a deeper feeling for the beauties of nature; but no one tells us less about man, or, in spite of one or two pretty pictures, such as that of Margaret in the 'Excursion,' has less power of describing man. There is too much contemplation, and too little action. There can, perhaps, hardly be a stronger proof of the want of poetical charm (proportioned to its length) in the 'Excursion' than that a very discerning and candid critic of the present day, and one by no means inclined to take a low estimate of Wordsworth's talents, more than hints a wish that the 'Excursion' had been in prose.

Southey has far more action, more energy, with considerable powers of description; but his action, and indeed all his poetry, seems to lack originality; to be derived rather from a study of excellent models than from native force; and he fails in the nice distinctiveness of character which is indispensable to interest the reader. This defect is perhaps more visible in his European than in his Oriental tales, because we ourselves know more of European than of Oriental feelings. But it exists alike in all. And probably it must be the case in all poems where the scene is laid in a country to which the writer is a total stranger. One or two of Byron's most beautiful works are called Eastern tales, but in fact they do not go beyond the coast of Asia Minor, beyond the countries which he himself had

seen, and of whose inhabitants he had caught the tone and feeling from personal acquaintance. Southey, on the contrary, had no personal knowledge of India; but gathered all his ideas on the subject from books. On all subjects, however, he writes like a man of great learning, great industry, great mastery over language, with a management of blank verse superior, I think, to anyone but Milton, and with a very musical flow in his poems of irregular metre. And so important are these qualities that his works, especially 'Roderick' and 'Kehama' have always had readers and admirers, and I doubt not will a hundred years hence be far better known than the generality of the poems of the present day, which are, generally speaking, open to the same strictures, without the learning and painstaking diligence which in him nearly counterbalances his deficiencies. Coleridge has written so little that the highest praise which any but his own immediate circle of family and friends can give him is that much of what he has done shows a degree and a variety of power which might have enabled him to take a much higher place among our poets had not all his gifts been marred by an unsteadiness and irresolution, proceeding probably from ill-health, which prevented his ever devoting himself with a continuous and persevering exertion to any single work of magnitude or importance.

The 'Curse of Kehama' is certainly the poem which shows to the greatest advantage the richness of Southey's imagination; and the description of a Suttee with which it opens, proves him to have possessed a great power of awakening sympathy; the despair of the young Nealliny, sacrificed to a barbarous superstition ere her honeymoon was over, is depicted with great vividness and truth.

(The Curse of Kehama.)

O sight of grief! the wives of Arvalan,
Young Azla, young Nealliny, are seen!
Their widow-robes of white,
With gold and jewels bright,
Each like an Eastern queen
Woe! woe! around their palankeen,
As on a bridal day,

With symphony, and dance, and song,
Their kindred and their friends come on.
The dance of sacrifice! the funeral song!
And next the victim slaves in long array,
Richly bedight to grace the fatal day,
Move onward to their death;
The clarions' stirring breath
Lifts their thin robes in every flowing fold,
And swells the woven gold,
That on the agitated air
Flutters and glitters to the torch's glare.

A man and maid of aspect wan and wild,
Then, side by side, by bowmen guarded, came;
O wretched father! O unhappy child!
Them were all eyes of all the throng exploring . .
Is this the daring man
Who raised his fatal hand at Arvalan?
Is this the wretch condemn'd to feel
Kehama's dreadful wrath?
Then were all hearts of all the throng deploring;
For not in that innumerable throng
Was one who loved the dead; for who could know
What aggravated wrong
Provoked the desperate blow!

Far, far behind, beyond all reach of sight,
In order'd files the torches flow along,
One ever-lengthening line of gliding light:
Far . . . far behind,
Rolls on the undistinguishable clamour,
Of horn, and trump, and tambour;
Incessant as the roar
Of streams which down the wintry mountain pour,
And louder than the dread commotion
Of breakers on a rocky shore,
When the winds rage over the waves,
And Ocean to the Tempest raves.

And now toward the bank they go,
Where winding on their way below,
Deep and strong the waters flow.
Here doth the funeral pile appear
With myrrh and ambergris bestrew'd,
And built of precious sandal wood

They cease their music and their outcry here,
Gently they rest the bier;
They wet the face of Arvalan,
No sign of life the sprinkled drops excite;
They feel his breast, . . . no motion there
They feel his lips, . . . no breath;
For not with feeble, nor with erring hand,
The brave avenger dealt the blow of death.
Then with a doubling peel and deeper blast,
The tambours and the trumpets sound on high,
And with a last and loudest cry,
They call on Arvalan.

Woe! woe! for Azla takes her seat
Upon the funeral pile!
Calmly she took her seat,
Calmly the whole terrific pomp survey'd
As on her lap the while
The lifeless head of Arvalan was laid.

Woe! woe! Nealliny,
The young Nealiny!
They strip her ornaments away,
Bracelet and anklet, ring, and chain, and zone
Around her neck they leave
The marriage knot alone, . . .
That marriage band, which when
Yon waning moon was young,
Around her virgin neck
With bridal joy was hung.
Then with white flowers, the coronal of death,
Her jetty locks they crown.

O sight of misery!
You cannot hear her cries, . . . their sound
In that wild dissonance is drown'd; . . .
But in her face you see
The supplication and the agony . . .
See in her swelling throat the desperate strength
That with vain effort struggles yet for life;
Her arms contracted now in fruitless strife,
Now wildly at full length
Towards the crowd in vain for pity spread, . . .
They force her on, they bind her to the dead.

Then all around retire;
Circling the pile, the ministering Bramins stand,
Each lifting in his hand a torch on fire.
Alone the father of the dead advanced
And lit the funeral pyre.
At once on every side
The circling torches drop,
At once on every side
The fragrant oil is pour'd,
At once on every side
The rapid flames rush up
Then hand in hand, the victim band
Roll in the dance around the funeral pyre;
Their garments' flying folds
Float inward to the fire;
In drunken whirl they wheel around;
One drops, . . . another plunges in; . .
And still with overwhelming din
The tambours and the trumpets sound;
And clap of hand, and shouts, and cries
From all the multitude arise;
While round and round, in giddy wheel
Intoxicate they roll and reel,
Till, one by one, whirl'd in they fall,
And the devouring flames have swallow'd all.

Then all was still; the drums and clarions ceased;
The multitude were hushed in silent awe;
Only the roaring of the flames was heard.

In two subsequent passages he exerts his talents in painting the beauties of nature, the magnificence of old forest trees, and the elaborate beauty of an Eastern garden.

But, turning from the view her mournful eyes,
Oh, whither should we wander, Kailyal cries,
Or wherefore seek in vain a place of rest?
Have we not here the earth beneath our tread
Heaven overhead,
A brook that winds through this sequester'd glade,
And yonder woods, to yield us fruit and shade?
The little all our wants require is nigh;
Hope we have none; . . . why travel on in fear?
We cannot fly from Fate, and Fate will find us here.

'Twas a fair scene wherein they stood,
A green and sunny glade amid the wood,
And in the midst an aged banian grew.
It was a goodly sight to see
That venerable tree,
For o'er the lawn, irregularly spread,
Fifty straight columns propt its lofty head;
And many a long depending shoot,
Seeking to strike its root,
Straight like a plummet, grew towards the ground.
Some on the lower boughs which crossed their way,
Fixing their bearded fibres, round and round,
With many a ring and wild contortion wound,
Some to the passing wind at times, with sway
Of gentle motion swung;
Others of younger growth, unmoved, were hung
Like stone-drops from the cavern's fretted height!
Beneath was smooth and fair to sight,
Nor weeds nor briars deform'd the natural floor,
And through the leafy cope which bower'd it o'er
Came gleams of chequer'd light.
So like a temple did it seem, that there
A pious heart's first impulse would be prayer.

. . . . . .

And now his feet attain that royal fane
Where Baly held of old his awful reign;
What once had been the Gardens spread around
Fair Gardens, once which wore perpetual green,
Where all sweet flowers through all the year were found,
And all fair fruits were through all seasons seen;
A place of Paradise, where each device
Of emulous Art with Nature strove to vie;
And Nature, on her part,
Call'd forth new powers wherewith to vanquish Art.
The Swerga-God himself, with envious eye,
Survey'd those peerless gardens in their prime;
Nor ever did the Lord of Light,
Who circles Earth and Heaven upon his way,
Behold from eldest time a goodlier sight
Than were the groves which Baly, in his might,
Made for his chosen place of solace and delight.

It was a Garden still beyond all price,
Even yet it was a place of Paradise;

For where the mighty Ocean could not spare,
There had he with his own creation,
Sought to repair his work of devastation,
And here were coral bowers,
And grots of madrepores,
And banks of sponge, as soft and fair to eye
As e'er was mossy bed
Whereon the wood-nymphs lie
With languid limbs in summer's sultry hours.
Here too were living flowers
Which, like a bud compacted,
Their purple cups contracted,
And now in open blossom spread,
Stretch'd like green anthers many a seeking head.
And arborets of jointed stone were there,
And plants of fibres fine as silkworm's thread;
Yea, beautiful as mermaid's golden hair
Upon the waves dispread.
Others, that like the broad banana growing,
Raised their long wrinkled leaves of purple hue,
Like streamers wide outflowing.
And whatsoe'er the depths of Ocean hide
From human eyes, Ladurlad there espied,
Trees of the deep, and shrubs and fruits and flowers,
As fair as ours,
Wherewith the sea-nymphs love their locks to braid,
When to their father's hall, at festival
Repairing they, in emulous array,
Their charms display,
To grace the banquet, and the solemn day.

The golden fountains had not ceased to flow;
And where they mingled with the briny sea,
There was a sight of wonder and delight,
To see the fish, like birds in air,
Above Ladurlad flying.
Round those strange waters they repair,
Their scarlet fins outspread and plying,
They float with gentle hovering there;
And now upon those little wings,
As if to dare forbidden things,
With wilful purpose bent,
Swift as an arrow from a bow,
They shoot across, and to and fro,
In rapid glance, like lightning go
Through that unwonted element.

'Roderick, the Last of the Goths,' is written in blank verse. In the first of the following passages we have a powerful, though perhaps prolix, description of the agitation of Roderick's mind when preparing for the conflict that, he was painfully conscious, was brought on him by his own vices, of which, indeed, he recognised it as the deserved chastisement. In the second, the battle itself is described with a great deal of poetic fire and energy, though the labour with which it is worked up is too manifest, and it lacks the vigour, arising from compression, which his great contemporaries, Scott and Byron, could infuse into similar scenes.

For his lost crown
And sceptre never had he felt a thought
Of pain; repentance had no pangs to spare
For trifles such as these, . . . the loss of these
Was a cheap penalty; . . . that he had fallen
Down to the lowest depth of wretchedness,
His hope and consolation. But to lose
His human station in the scale of things, . . .
To see brute nature scorn him, and renounce
Its homage to the human form divine; . . .
Had then Almighty vengeance thus revealed
His punishment, and was he fallen indeed
Below fallen man, below redemption's reach, . . .
Made lower than the beasts, and like the beasts
To perish! . . . Such temptations troubled him
By day, and in the visions of the night;
And even in sleep he struggled with the thought,
And waking with the effort of his prayers
The dream assailed him still.
A wilder form
Sometimes his poignant penitence assumed,
Starting with force revived from intervals
Of calmer passion or exhausted rest;
When floating back upon the tide of thought
Remembrance to a self-excusing strain
Beguiled him, and recall'd in long array
The sorrows and the secret impulses
Which to the abyss of wretchedness and guilt
Led their unwary victim. The evil hour
Return'd upon him, when reluctantly
Yielding to worldly counsel his assent,

In wedlock to an ill-assorted mate
He gave his cold unwilling hand: then came
The disappointment of the barren bed,
The hope deceived, the soul dissatisfied,
Home without love, and privacy from which
Delight was banish'd first, and peace too soon
Departed. Was it strange that when he met
A heart attuned, . . . a spirit like his own,
Of lofty pitch, yet in affection mild,
And tender as a youthful mother's joy, . .
Oh was it strange if at such sympathy
The feelings which within his breast repell'd
And chill'd had shrunk, should open forth like flowers
After cold winds of night, when gentle gales
Restore the genial sun? If all were known,
Would it indeed be not to be forgiven? . . .
(Thus would he lay the unction to his soul,)
If all were truly known, as Heaven knows all,
Heaven that is merciful as well as just, . . .
A passion slow and mutual in its growth,
Pure as fraternal love, long self-concealed
And when confess'd in silence, long controll'd;
Treacherous occasion, human frailty, fear
Of endless separation, worse than death, . . .
The purpose and the hope with which the Fiend
Tempted, deceived, and madden'd him, . . . but then
As at a new temptation would he start,
Shuddering beneath the intolerable shame,
And clench in agony his matted hair;
While in his soul the perilous thought arose,
How easy 'twere to plunge where yonder waves
Invited him to rest.
Oh for a voice
Of comfort, . . . for a ray of hope from Heaven!
A hand that from these billows of despair
May reach and snatch him ere he sink engulph'd!

. . . . . .

With that he fell upon the old man's neck;
Then vaulted in the saddle, gave the reins,
And soon rejoin'd the host. 'On, comrades, on!
Victory and Vengeance!' he exclaim'd, and took
The lead on that good charger, he alone
Horsed for the onset. They with one consent
Gave all their voices to the inspiring cry,
'Victory and Vengeance!' and the hills and rocks

Caught the prophetic shout and rolled it round.
Count Pedro's people heard amid the heat
Of battle, and return'd the glad acclaim.
The astonish'd Musselmen, on all sides charged,
Hear that tremendous cry; yet manfully
They stood, and everywhere with gallant front
Opposed in fair array the shock of war.
Desperately they fought, like men expert in arms,
And knowing that no safety could be found
Save from their own right hands. No former day
Of all his long career had seen their chief
Approved so well; nor had Witiza's sons
Ever before this hour achieved in fight
Such feats of resolute valour. Sisibert
Beheld Pelayo in the field afoot,
And twice essay'd beneath his horse's feet
To thrust him down. Twice did the prince evade
The shock, and twice upon his shield receiv'd
The fratricidal sword. 'Tempt me no more,
Son of Witiza,' cried the indignant chief,
'Lest I forget what mother gave thee birth!'
Go meet thy death from any hand but mine!'
He said, and turn'd aside. 'Fitliest from me!'
Exclaim'd a dreadful voice, as through the throng
Orelio forced his way; 'fitliest from me
Receive the rightful death too long withheld!
'Tis Roderick strikes the blow!' And as he spake,
Upon the traitor's shoulder fierce he drove
The weapon, well-bestow'd. He in the seat
Totter'd and fell. The Avenger hasten'd on
In search of Ebba; and in the heat of fight
Rejoicing and forgetful of all else,
Set up his cry as he was wont in youth,
'Roderick the Goth!' . . . his war-cry known so well.
Pelayo eagerly took up the word,
And shouted out his kinsman's name beloved,
'Roderick the Goth! Roderick and Victory!
Roderick and Vengeance!' Odoar gave it forth;
Urban repeated it, and through his ranks
Count Pedro sent the cry. Not from the field
Of his great victory, when Witiza fell,
With louder acclamations had that name
Been borne abroad upon the winds of heaven.
The unreflecting throng, who yesterday,

If it had pass'd their lips, would with a curse
Have clogg'd it, echoed it as if it came
From some celestial voice in the air, reveal'd
To be the certain pledge of all their hopes,
'Roderick the Goth! Roderick and Victory!
Roderick and Vengeance!' O'er the field it spread,
All hearts and tongues uniting in the cry;
Mountains, and rocks, and vales re-echoed round;
And he, rejoicing in his strength, rode on,
Laying on the Moors with that good sword, and smote,
And overthrew, and scatter'd, and destroy'd,
And trampled down; and still at every blow
Exultingly he sent the war-cry forth,
'Roderick the Goth! Roderick and Victory!
Roderick and Vengeance!'
Thus he made his way,
Smiting and slaying through the astonish'd ranks
Till he beheld, where on a fiery barb,
Ebba, performing well a soldier's part,
Dealt to the right and left his deadly blows.
With mutual rage they met. The renegade
Displays a scymitar, the splendid gift
Of Walid from Damascus sent; its hilt
Emboss'd with gems, its blade of perfect steel,
Which, like a mirror sparkling to the sun,
With dazzling splendour flash'd. The Goth objects
His shield, and on its rim receives the edge
Driven from its aim aside, and of its force
Diminish'd. Many a frustrate stroke was dealt
On either part, and many a foin and thrust
Aim'd and rebated; many a deadly blow
Straight or reverse, delivered and repell'd.
Roderick at length with better speed hath reach'd
The apostate's turban, and through all its folds
The true Cantabrian weapon making way
Attain'd his forehead. 'Wretch!' the avenger cried,
'It comes from Roderick's hand! Roderick the Goth,
Who spared, who trusted thee, and was betray'd!
Go tell thy father now how thou has sped
With all thy treasons!' Saying thus he seized
The miserable, who, blinded now with blood,
Reel'd in the saddle; and with sidelong step
Backing Orelio, drew him to the ground.
He shrieking, as beneath the horse's feet

He fell, forgot his late-learnt creed, and called
On Mary's name. The dreadful Goth pass'd on,
Still plunging through the thickest war, and still
Scattering, where'er he turned, the affrighted ranks.

Oh who could tell what deeds were wrought that day;
Or who endure to hear the tale of rage,
Hatred, and madness, and despair, and fear,
Horror, and wounds, and agony, and death,
The cries, the blasphemies, the shrieks, and groans,
And prayers, which mingled with the din of arms
In one wild uproar of terrific sounds;
While over all predominant was heard,
Reiterate from the conquerors o'er the field,
'Roderick the Goth! Roderick and Victory!
Roderick and Vengeance!'

CHAPTER XVI.

WALTER SCOTT.

A.D. 1771–1832.

IT has been mentioned that Coleridge's 'Christabel' had suggested to Walter Scott the metre for the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.' So that it is almost in a natural order that we now come to consider the works and character of that great writer who, since the days of Milton, must be accounted the chief pride and glory of British literature. He is the only author in any country who by general consent is admitted to stand in the very front rank as a composer of both poetry and prose; his prose, that is to say, his novels, being indeed in many points akin to his poetry.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on August 15, 1771, being one of the younger sons of a writer to the Signet of the same name. He was, as he has recorded in a short autobiographical sketch of his early days, of gentle birth, his father belonging to the Scotts of Harden, a branch of the great Border family of Buccleuch, and his mother being descended from the Swintons, a knightly house of great distinction in the feudal ages. In one respect his childhood was unfortunate, since, before he was two years old, he was attacked by a fever which left his right leg shrunk and greatly enfeebled; but the judicious pains which were taken to remove the infirmity, though they did not succeed in that object, taking the direction of giving him abundant fresh air, and as much exercise as he was capable of, rendered him a remarkably strong and healthy boy. His infirmity, however, necessarily disabled him from taking part in the games of his schoolfellows, and drove him to find his chief amusement in reading. He was not indifferent to the beauties of the Latin poets, and

before he was fifteen gained considerable credit with the Rector of the High School of Edinburgh, where he was educated, for some volunteer translations of Horace and Virgil, which were considered to show great poetical facility; but his favourite studies were not so much the classical authors which win the commendation of schoolmasters, as old ballads, records of the early history of his native land, and of the sufferings of the Royalists in the Stuart cause; his minute acquaintance with which had different influences on the different people with whom he was brought into contact. Some of the staid old visitors of his father thought a boy who disturbed the house by shouting out stanzas of 'Hardyknute,' and other legendary tales of that class, little better than a nuisance; but his schoolfellows, as boys are apt to do, appreciated highly a talent which to them had the additional charm of novelty. And, as he had the skill to impart his knowledge to others, a knot of them would gather round the fire on winter evenings to listen to the tales which he had culled from his favourite books, and which he poured forth with a memory and power of embellishment that gave general delight, and won him warmer admiration than if he had been the best golf or football player in the school. The practice of this pastime in his schoolboy days was the foreshadowing of the renown he was destined to achieve, and of the universal delight he was hereafter to give to the whole nation.

He did not, however, remain long at school. His father destined him for his own profession; and, before he was fifteen, he was removed from school to learn the law in his father's office, where he managed to combine with the due performance of the tasks allotted to him there, a tolerably free indulgence in studies more congenial to his taste, and even to open for himself a wider and richer field by learning French and Italian. At the age of twenty-one he was called to the bar, and, being aided by his professional connections, speedily began to get a little business, and a fair reputation as a rising young advocate; still, however, keeping up and extending his school character, as one deeply versed in all the traditions of past ages, and un-

rivalled in his faculty of relating tales founded on them. Even then it might have been safe to predict that he would hereafter aspire to the fame of the novelist. But in 1794 the accidental hearing of an unpublished version of a German ballad, Burger's 'Leonora,' re-awakened his poetical talent. He remembered the praise he had won while a boy by his translations of Virgil and Horace, and undertook to furnish another version of 'Leonora,' which he executed with a fidelity and vigour that earned him warm praise from all who were allowed to see it, a verdict which was fully confirmed when, a couple of years afterwards, he published his translation with others of one or two more poems by the same author.

The fondness for writing, like other appetites, is increased by indulgence; he executed other translations from the German, which were published in Monk Lewis's 'Tales of Wonder;' and, being emboldened by the praise he met with, he presently ventured on some original ballads in something of the same style, varying his literary occupations with what he calls an 'office most inconsistent with romance,' that of organising a body of volunteer cavalry to provide against a hostile invasion, which was known to be a favourite project of the rulers of France at that period, of which force he himself became quartermaster, discharging his new duties with characteristic zeal, and with an unfailing heartiness of merriment which rendered his comrades as enthusiastic in the service as himself; and also by falling in love with a Miss Carpenter, who shortly afterwards became his wife. The lady had a competent fortune, and at the end of 1799 her husband was placed in a situation to indulge his literary tastes with less scruple, by being appointed to the office of Sheriff of Selkirkshire, with a salary of 300*l.* a year. He began almost at once to slacken in his attention to his profession, except as far as the duties of his new office were concerned; though the first work of importance which he took in hand was not an original composition, but the collecting and editing the ballads of the Scottish border, a task of great difficulty and labour, since many of them were only preserved in single broadsheets scattered here and there among the illiterate

population of the farmers and shepherds of the district, and for some he had nothing to trust to but the memories of those who had recited or sung them in their youth.

But the labour was to him, indeed, a labour of love; and, as he undertook it with enthusiasm, he executed it with complete success, building up a high reputation among the lovers of literature in England as well as in Scotland, which made everyone look with eagerness for some composition of his own. They were not long before they were gratified in a far higher degree than could have been anticipated by his warmest admirers. He had added to the last volume of the 'Border Minstrelsy' a few original ballads in professed imitation of the style and in the old-fashioned stanza, and was planning some more elaborate work, but was perplexed by the difficulty of finding a suitable subject, when Lady Dalkeith, then lately married, was attracted by an old goblin tradition which one of her new neighbours on the Border had related to her, and suggested it to her clansman, as the poet was proud to consider himself, as a theme for another ballad. 'To hear was to obey;' but he was anxious to try some other metre than the old quatrain, and was doubting what to substitute for it, when the recitation by a friend of a fragment of Coleridge's 'Christabel,' not yet published, struck his ear as presenting the very metre which of all others was the most suitable for a poem on so fanciful a subject. A happier idea never occurred to any poet. He improved upon his model, imparting to the rhythm a variety and also an energy which is to be found in the works of no previous employer of the metre, and in the beginning of 1805 he published the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' which at once placed him immeasurably above all existing poets, and on a level with all who had written since Milton. Its popularity certainly exceeded that of any poem that had ever been published; new editions could hardly be printed with sufficient rapidity. Even the critics by profession, who at that time seemed to think criticism inconsistent with praise, could scarcely find anything to blame in it, beyond the introduction of a few homely Scotch names, while everyone else was loud and unanimous in admiration. Even the great minister, amid

the overwhelming cares which were helping to bow him down to an early grave, stole an hour from Nelson's despatches, for the 'last of all the bards who sang of border chivalry,' and owned that he had derived from the poem a greater idea than he had hitherto had of the power of poetry. Some of the descriptions, he said, had impressed him with a sense of reality which he should previously have thought within the reach perhaps of painting, but utterly unattainable by the descriptive powers of any writer.[1]

And the 'Lay' did, indeed, deserve all the praise it received. No poem in the language showed a greater feeling of the beauties of nature, or combined with it a richer power in describing human feelings, or a more accurate acquaintance with the character of the age, though bygone, in which the scene was laid. The Minstrel himself, in whose mouth the 'Lay' is put, is confessedly among the most beautiful creations of any poet. And I might speak of the vigour of his warlike pictures, of the exquisite delicacy of his female portraiture, as equal in merit, were not these qualities shown still more conspicuously in some of the works which followed. For it was impossible that success such as he had met with could fail to beget an appetite for another triumph. And the 'Lay' was hardly published before he began to arrange the plot of a second poem; though first giving himself a respite which no man but one of such vast knowledge of our early literature, and unwearied industry, would have thought a relief, by editing Dryden's works, and writing an elaborate memoir of 'Glorious John.' 'Poetry,' as he wrote to one of his most valued friends, 'is a scourging crop, and should not be hastily repeated. Editing is a green crop of turnips, extremely useful for those who cannot afford a summer fallow.'[2] And it took so long to get this green crop out of the ground that it was not till three years after the publication of the 'Lay' that 'Marmion,' a tale of Flodden

[1] Lockhart's Life of Scott, c. 34. Pitt probably had in his mind

'Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.'

[2] Lockhart, *ibid.*

Field, was published. The 'Lay' had not more outrun all the anticipations of its excellence than 'Marmion' now exceeded the still warmer expectations to which the beauty of its predecessor had given birth. When the Edinburgh reviewer, who is understood to have been the editor himself, the redoubted Jeffrey, declared that 'no epic bard whom he could remember carried the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement than Scott, in his description of the' fatal field,

> Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,
> And broken was her shield,

readers in general agreed with him, and were for a moment hardly inclined to quarrel with a verdict which seemed to place the poet of their own age and country on a level even with Homer. And in truth it was not only in the marvellous energy of his battle-pieces that Scott trod, though at a respectful distance, in the steps of the great father of poets. If Helen and Andromache delight the classical scholar by the contrast they present to Hector and Achilles; our own poet has drawn Margaret, and Constance, and Ellen with a delicacy of touch and a keen appreciation of pure and womanly feeling which, as a female portrait painter, bespeak him inferior to Homer alone. Yet great as 'Marmion' is, in enduring popularity it has hardly equalled the 'Lady of the Lake,' which after an interval of two years succeeded it. The 'Lady of the Lake' differed from both 'Marmion' and the 'Lay' in having a more carefully elaborated plan, a more highly polished diction, with a versification more uniformly melodious, if not more richly varied or more vigorous, which apparently showed it to be the author's favourite: in other respects it partook of the excellences of both its predecessors. Pitt might again have marvelled that language should ever be able to impress the mind with such a feeling of lifelike reality as was produced by Roderick's clansmen starting from the heather to overwhelm the hardy stranger who affronted their chief in his own district. If a single combat can ever be compared to a general battle, then the duel between the chieftain and Fitzjames may be placed alongside even

Flodden. Nor must we omit to notice the discrimination with which, in 'Marmion' and the 'Lady of the Lake,' the poet has painted the different characters of the two kings, fully preserving the dignity of both, but drawing a careful distinction between the courtly stateliness with which the father leads out the Lady Heron to the dance, and the condescending affability with which the son

> ——— was bending low
> To his white jennet's saddle-bow,
> Doffing his cap to city dame,
> Who smiled and blushed for pride and shame;

so that Byron declared he was especially 'the poet of princes,' and the Regent himself, a very accomplished and competent judge, assented, with the addition that Scott's kings 'were no less royal than poetical.'[1] Another peculiar charm of the 'Lady of the Lake' was to be found in the descriptions of rural or rather mountain and sylvan scenery which are profusely scattered over it, showing his right, in another point of view, also to the title of the most picturesque of modern poets.

These three are usually reckoned his masterpieces, though they were followed by others which would have established the reputation of any unknown writer. The scene of his next, 'Rokeby,' was laid in England, at the time of the Rebellion; and he himself hoped not only that it would succeed with, but that it would also in some degree surprise, the public, because 'the interest of the work turned upon character,' while, in his own view, or at least in his own intention, 'the force in the "Lay" had been thrown on *style*; in "Marmion" on *description*; in the "Lady of the Lake" on *incident*.' He especially names Bertram, the 'villain' of the piece, as 'a Caravaggio sketch, quite in keeping with nature, whatever critics may say to the contrary.'[2] But in all probability he was thinking more, even if he did not acknowledge it to himself, of Matilda, whom he admits to be drawn from life, and of whom Lockhart believes the original to have been a lady with whom in his youth he had fallen

[1] Lockhart's Life, c. 25. [2] *Ibid.* c. 26.

ardently in love, conjecturing further that the rivalry for Matilda's hand, described in the poem, presented 'something more than a shadow' of the circumstances and disappointment of Scott's own love-suit.

I mentioned before his undertaking a 'Life of Dryden' and an edition of his works as a sort of holiday. At the same time that he was writing the 'Lady of the Lake' and 'Rokeby' he was also engaged in a similar way on Swift. And he now carried his fancy for relieving his mind by occupying it with different employments at the same time further than before, by adding to Swift and 'Rokeby' a second poem, the 'Bridal of Triermain,' in the publication of which he also indulged himself in mystifying the public in something of the same way that he tried afterwards on a larger scale. In less than two months after the publication of 'Rokeby,' the 'Bridal' came out anonymously. It certainly seemed almost impossible that the author of 'Rokeby' should have written it in the time. And the most experienced and judicious critics treated it as an imitation of his style; the critic in the 'Quarterly Review,' himself an intimate friend of Scott, but one who had not been let into the secret, even pronouncing that, 'if inferior in vigour to some of his productions, it equalled or surpassed them in elegance and beauty.' To equal the vigour of 'Marmion' was perhaps almost impossible; but certainly Scott, in the tournament for Gyneth's hand has surpassed everyone but himself. Even the admirers of Dryden, who alone of our poets since the Restoration had been distinguished for his energy, and who has drawn a similar scene, must allow that the tournay in 'Palamon and Arcite' can bear no comparison with this; while the tenderness and delicacy of the scene in which Arthur, like Æneas, takes leave of Guendolen, another Dido of gentler temper, was wholly beyond the conception of Dryden, or the genius of his age.

Once more, and once more only, did he woo the Muse. And before that time he had laid the foundation of a fame surpassing even that which his poems had won for him, by the publication of 'Waverley.' I say fame, because, though the great novel, like the 'Bridal,' was published anony-

mously, the conviction that no one but Scott could be the author was so strong and so universal that from the very first it was spoken of as his. As his friend Morritt, of Rokeby, told him, 'he wore his disguise something after the manner of Bottom the weaver; and in spite of himself the truth would soon peep out.' And in a very short time the belief ripened into as much certainty as could attach to an opinion which the author abstained from ratifying by an open avowal. In his last poem he went back to his native land for the scene, to the greatest of her sons for his hero. The 'Lord of the Isles' is the title; the subject is Bruce and Bannockburn; and Bruce's exploits do not more exceed those of ordinary men than the celebration of them here surpasses in beauty and vigour the pictures drawn by any other modern poets of other heroes. The 'Lord of the Isles' is as brilliant in colouring as the 'Lay,' as vivid in description as the 'Lady of the Lake;' it even introduces us to scenes which the author had previously left untried, in the adventurous voyage of the great chief among the

> ——— islets gay
> That guard famed Staffa round;

and if we were to search through all his works in prose and poetry for a proof of the inexhaustible richness and variety of his imagination, it would not be possible to find a more convincing example of it than is afforded by the complete difference between his descriptions of two battles which must have had so many features in common as Flodden and Bannockburn, fought, as they were, by the same nations, in the same district, with the same weapons. But the 'Lord of the Isles' was his last poem. More than one circumstance led to its being so. The unparalleled popularity of 'Waverley,' and of the second novel, 'Guy Mannering,' which came out a few weeks after the poem, and which made him believe that he had lighted on a new vein of his genius, less worked out, was, no doubt, the principal fact which unconsciously influenced him; but he himself attributed his abandonment of poetry to the perception that the public taste was inclined to prefer a new rival, Byron, who had lately been pouring forth, with a

profusion and rapidity equal to his own, poem after poem of sparkling brilliancy, vividness of passion, and energy of action, these qualities being set off by the novelty of the scenery, which was laid in distant and then but little known lands; while, to the fashionable English world, like other fashionable worlds, always inclined to whatever was newest, the attractiveness of the works was further heightened by a mood of melancholy and misanthropy which ran through them, and by a general impression that, whatever might be the names of the heroes, the characters were all drawn, and that designedly, from the poet himself. The combination of these different attractions was, for a time, irresistible. Not even in their first flush of popularity had as many copies of the 'Lay' or 'Marmion' been sold in a month as were sold of the 'Corsair' or the 'Bride of Abydos' in a single day. And Scott, who had always entertained a far humbler idea of his own poetical genius and of the striking value of his works than anyone else, without a sigh relinquished the field to his youthful rival, and, for the rest of his life, confined himself to his novels.

I should not do justice to the singularly amiable, honest character of the man if I omitted to point out the absolute freedom from jealousy or envy which his whole conduct towards Byron evinces. Literary men, and especially poets, have too often incurred the reproach of bearing 'no rival near their throne.' We have seen the fierce ill-will which Dryden and Pope bore to almost all the poetical brotherhood of their own day. And if Scott had regarded Byron with such a feeling, the younger poet would have had no reason to complain, since, in his youth, he had gone out of his way to provoke it, by a wanton attack on all of Scott's poems that were before the world when he published his satire. But Scott was too generous to resent a folly which he knew had been repented of, and so far too magnanimous to feel jealousy of contemporary merit, even when, for the moment, it seemed to prevent his own works from receiving their due meed of praise, that no one extolled Byron's poems more warmly, nor, when the noble poet was attacked on other grounds, did anyone stand forward more earnestly or more judiciously in his defence.

If, before proceeding to speak of his novels, we pause to estimate the rank to which Scott is entitled as a poet, we may probably come to the conclusion that his poems are deficient in no one quality requisite either to excite momentary admiration or to create permanent interest in the mind of the reader. They are distinguished by both richness and boldness of imagination, by truth of character, by picturesqueness of description, and, generally speaking, by great propriety of language, and exquisite power and variety of versification; though, on these latter points, he is confessedly at times careless; nor does his ear seem to have that exquisite correctness, that keen perception of an inharmonious line which distinguished Byron. But his more especial characteristics seem to be, in the first place, a grand antique simplicity, and in the second, an uninterrupted activity. There is no want of appropriate and characteristic reflection when the occasion requires such; but, on the other hand, there are no musings of contemplative indolence, brought in suitably and unsuitably, in such a guise that even admirers would as willingly see them in prose, and that detractors find a difficulty in distinguishing them from prose, except by the form in which they are printed. Scott's subjects are the antique themes, chosen in the times when

> the burden of minstrelsy
> Was knighthood's dauntless deed, and beauty's matchless eye.

His conception of the poet's duty is, as he has implied in another passage, to preserve in faithful song alike the true love of the maiden, the glory of the warrior, the feudal grandeur of the royal chief, and an equally chivalrous appreciation of what is due to them pervades the whole of his works. Fashion, or what Byron pronounced to be merely a surfeit of his beauties and a weariness of hearing one name singled out for especial and continual praise, may have caused him for a time to be superseded in the popular favour, but the people are rarely unjust or blind for any length of time. In the present day I think he and Byron share with very tolerable equality the admiration of readers of poetry; both being surpassed for the

moment in the number of their present admirers by living writers of immeasurably inferior powers. Nor is this to be wondered at. In a state of society such as now exists, it always will happen that the friends and panegyrists of living bards will succeed for the moment in exalting them above their predecessors. But though superficial qualities may win temporary eulogy, nothing but solid merit can permanently engross the attention of posterity; and there is but little risk in predicting that in succeeding generations, when the impartial verdict of time shall have superseded the influences of partiality and fashion, much that is now placed on a level with them will in its turn be supplanted by newer favourites, and the poems of Scott and Byron will be accounted classics of the language.

It remains to speak of his novels. It has been said already that they were distinguished by many of the qualities which had won such general favour for his poetry. And in truth a great novelist must necessarily be endowed with many of the qualities of the poet. Like him he must have a fertile imagination, an appreciation of character, an instinctive and unswerving sense of propriety, a mastery of language, and a power of lively and diversified description. All these Scott of course brought to his new compositions, and thus shed over them a grace of which, without his example, prose might hardly have been supposed capable; adding, also, a liveliness of wit and humour for which the poems had furnished little or no occasion. It would carry us beyond our limits to attempt to give a separate description of the different tales which, for the next twelve or fourteen years, he poured forth with a luxuriant and seemingly inexhaustible rapidity which was not the least surprising circumstance connected with them. With the exception of two, in which he turns aside to foreign countries to bring before his readers the wily Louis XI., with the bold or rash Charles of Burgundy, the scenes are all laid in the British Isles, some being designed to give an idea of the characters of one or other of our ancient princes: of Richard I., of John, of Elizabeth, of Mary of Scotland, of James I., of Charles II., or of their

luckless descendant, the young Pretender; others being devoted to a representation of the domestic life and manners of his own countrymen, or of their neighbours on the northern frontier of England. And it is hard, indeed, to say which class, or which separate tale, is the most excellent. If, in portraying the fiery Richard or the irresistible Queen of Scots, he shows himself, as brilliantly as in his poems, the especial painter of princes, 'Guy Mannering,' 'The Antiquary,' and the 'Heart of Mid Lothian' prove him no less able to enter into the feelings of the humbler classes. Perhaps the sorrow of others has never appealed to our sympathies more tenderly than in the agony of the old fisherman and his wife, suddenly bereft of the son who was not only their pride, but, as they fondly believed, the admiration of all their friends; or in the mute despair with which the old Cameronian holds between his hands the evidence of his daughter's shame and danger. The half-witted dependent of the old Baron; the ever ready wit of Ravenswood's faithful old servant, who fears neither ridicule in this world nor judgment in the next, if he can only save the credit of the family, and in whose eyes 'a good offcome[1] is often better than the thing itself,' are drawn with equal truth to nature; while, though differing in the motives which led them to the field, Dalgetty is not unworthy to be placed alongside the immortal lover of Dulcinea. The point in which the novels most closely resemble the poems is the exquisite delicacy of the female portraits which are exhibited in both. If poetry has rarely surpassed the pictures of Margaret, and Ellen, and Edith, prose has certainly never approached the delineation of the noble-minded Alice Lee, of the more lively Die Vernon, of the lovely but ill-starred Amy Robsart; and such masterly portraiture of the sex which, generally speaking, presents less distinctive features than are brought out by the more varied careers of their rougher partners, is probably the surest proof of genius of the very highest class.

It is sad to have to close this sketch with the statement that circumstances connected with, and indeed immediately

[1] Scotch, or Caleb Balderston, for 'an excuse.'

arising out of the unprecedented merit and popularity of these novels, led to misfortunes which clouded, and probably shortened, the latter days of their great author. He had conceived a friendship for his chief publisher and printers, of whom Constable was one, and two brothers named John and James Ballantyne the others, so that he had got into the habit of giving them assistance in their pecuniary transactions, and, at last, had become a partner in Ballantyne's house, and involved, to a considerable extent, in the affairs of that of Constable also. With the management of any part of the commercial transactions of either he had never interfered, leaving it entirely in the hands of those ostensibly responsible, of whom Constable was utterly reckless, and James Ballantyne incurably careless and indolent. The consequence might have been foreseen. The winter of 1825–6 was fatal to many firms whose business was conducted with prudence and energy; houses such as those of these Scotch publishers and printers had no chance of escaping, and in January 1826 Scott found himself a partner of bankrupts and himself a bankrupt. It was a calamity which might have bowed any man to the earth, for it was no common misfortune that thus fell upon him. The whole earnings of a long and honorable life were swept away at one blow. He had conceived a hope that he too, by acts very different from those practised by his border ancestors, might found a distinct branch of the great Scott family, and with this view he had gradually purchased a tolerable estate, and had built on it a house in something of the old baronial style, to which he had given the name of Abbotsford, and where he hoped his descendants might long preserve his memory. That hope, so honorable to conceive, so long and so proudly cherished, seemed struck from under him, for the liabilities in which Ballantyne had involved him were more than enough to absorb all his resources. But never did misfortune, often as it brings out high qualities which might otherwise never have been observed or never exerted, display any man's strength of mind or inflexible honesty of purpose in a more striking or honorable light. It did no slight honour also to the sincerity of friendship and the warmth of admiration

which generous minds feel for genius exerted, as his had been, for the honour of his country and the benefit of mankind. It was not till the inevitable exposure of his partner's affairs necessitated the disclosure that he formally avowed himself the author of 'Waverley,' and of the brilliant series of works which had hitherto been published merely as the productions of that author. But he was universally believed, if it might not be said known to be the writer, and many of those to whom, as Lord Dudley said,[1] he had given months of delight, hastened to show their sense of the obligation. From all quarters offers of the most liberal assistance flowed in, one anonymous admirer, whose incognito was never penetrated, even making the munificent offer of placing 30,000*l.* at his disposal. A musician named Pole, who had given lessons on the harp to Miss Scott, tendered him 500*l.* or 600*l.*, 'probably his all' as Scott remarked; but he declined all such aid; he resolved that 'he would involve no friend, rich or poor.' It was a gratification and a great one, to see, as he records in his journal, such proofs that 'there is much good in the world after all.' But he was resolved to owe his extrication from debt to himself alone. He had once become rich by his pen; he was resolved by his pen alone to free himself from every claim which could be brought against him. When the crash came, it found him at work on one of his most exquisite novels, 'Woodstock;' and he had also undertaken, some time before, to write a life of the great Napoleon for a miscellany which Constable had been projecting. The idea of the miscellany was of course dropped, though only for a time. But the moment that 'Woodstock' was published, Scott commenced the Life, and toiled at it with such unceasing perseverance that he completed it in a single year. It can hardly be said to be worthy of his fame; but it produced him a vast sum of money; a sum which, as his affectionate biographer, his son-in-law Lock-

[1] On hearing of his involvement in Ballantyne's bankruptcy, Earl Dudley said to Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, 'Scott ruined! the author of Waverley ruined! Let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow richer than Rothschild.'

hart, says, startles him even to mention: 18,000*l.*: by far the largest ever paid for any literary work of any kind. It was very near having one other consequence scarcely less remarkable; as General Gourgaud, an aide-de-camp of the Emperor, who fancied the book represented him at some disadvantage, threatened to cross over to England and prove his innocence by challenging the author; and Scott, resolved not to let 'his country be dishonoured through his side' provided himself with a second against the arrival of his martial adversary. But the General's wrath found safer vent in a pamphlet, and Scott was left at leisure to continue his exertions to clear off his liabilities. The 'Fair Maid of Perth' succeeded 'Woodstock;' 'Anne of Geierstein,' a tale of great power, followed the 'Fair Maid;' in two years Scott actually paid off 40,000*l.* by his labours; and so highly did Ballantyne's creditors appreciate his unequalled efforts to satisfy their demands, efforts the more honorable that a court had decided that they had no claim whatever to any part of his earnings subsequent to the bankruptcy, that they presented him with 'all the furniture, plate, library, paintings, and,' as they expressed it, 'curiosities of every description,' which were contained at Abbotsford, and 'in grateful acknowledgment of the unparalleled and most successful exertions which he had made and continued to make for them.'

But these exertions overtasked his strength, and in April 1831 brought on a severe stroke of paralysis, of which indeed he had some warnings in an attack of illness nearly two years before. He tried a milder air, and, by the advice of his physicians, in the autumn exchanged the bleakness of his native climate for the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, the Government placing a frigate at his disposal to convey him to his destination. Yet, even when his strength was thus broken, he would not lay aside work: he had still two novels in hand, to which he put the finishing strokes before he sailed; but they bear the trace of his illness, and are not worthy of his reputation. The winter in Italy afforded a relaxation to his mind, but it could not remove the bodily infirmities; and, longing once more to see his home, he quitted Naples early in the spring. As he

travelled back overland through Germany, with perhaps greater rapidity than consisted with his weakness, he had a more serious attack than before, so that it was not without difficulty that he reached London, and many weeks passed before he could be removed northwards. At last, however, in the middle of July, he reached Abbotsford, and there, after two more months of debility, it may be hoped, rather than of suffering, he died on the 21st of September. If literature had made no man as wealthy as he for a time had been, still more certainly may it be said that no literary man had descended to the grave with such honour. 'Almost every newspaper that announced the event in Scotland, and many in England, had the signs of mourning usual on the demise of the king.'[1] A general sorrow affected all classes,[2] who felt that they had lost one who was an honour, not only to his country, but to his kind: a man at once of unsurpassed genius and of stainless honour.

Our first extract gives Scott's own idea of the functions of a poet, as the preserver from oblivion of every feeling, and of every kind of renown.

(Lay of the Last Minstrel, canto v. stanzas 1, 2.)

Call it not vain: they do not err
Who say that, when the Poet dies,
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies;
Who say, tall cliff, and cavern lone,
For the departed bard make moan;
That mountains weep in crystal rill;
That flowers in tears of balm distil;
Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks, in deeper groan, reply;
That rivers teach their rushing wave,
To murmur dirges round his grave.

[1] Lockhart's Life of Scott, chap. lxxxiii.

[2] Allan Cunningham mentions that, walking home late one night (in June 1832), he found several working-men standing together at the corner of Jermyn Street, and one of them asked him—as if there were but one deathbed in London—'Do you know, sir, if this is the street in which he is lying?'

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn,
Those things inanimate can mourn;
But that the stream, the wood, the gale,
Is vocal with the plaintive wail
Of those, who, else forgotten long,
Lived in the poet's faithful song,
And with the poet's parting breath,
Whose memory feels a second death.
The maid's pale shade, who wails her lot,
That love, true love, should be forgot,
From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear,
Upon the gentle minstrel's bier:
The phantom knight, his glory fled,
Mourns o'er the field he heaped with dead;
Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
And shrieks along the battle-plain:
The chief, whose antique crownlet long
Still sparkled in the feudal song,
Now, from the mountain's misty throne,
Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
His ashes undistinguished lie;
His place, his power, his memory die:
His groans the lonely caverns fill,
His tears of rage impel the rill;
All mourn the minstrel's harp unstrung,
Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

Another extract from the same poem has been often quoted as embodying the spirit of true patriotism, with more vividness than any other poet since Shakespeare has expressed that most noble and most beneficial of all feelings; that parent of all dutiful service to the land; that source of all that is honorable and disinterested in the person who guides himself by its impulses.

(Canto vi. stanzas 1, 2.)

Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native land!'
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And doubly dying, shall go down,
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires, what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still, as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends, thy woods and streams were left:
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still feel the breeze down Ettricke break,
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot stone
Though there, forgotten and alone,
The Bard may draw his parting groan.

Our next extract from his most elaborate poem affords an exquisite specimen of our poet's pre-eminent excellence as a painter of the beauties of scenery.

(Lady of the Lake, canto i. stanzas 11–15.)

The western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in flood of living fire;
But not a setting beam could glow,
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path, in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell,
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle,

Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptous piled on Shinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Formed turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever decked,
Or mosque of eastern architect,
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lacked they many a banner fair;
For, from their shivered brows displayed,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew-drop sheen,
The briar-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

Boon nature scattered, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalmed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale, and violet flower
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Grouped their dark hues with every stain,
The weather-beaten crags retain,
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high
His boughs athwart the narrowed sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced
Where glistening streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

* * * * *

And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far-projecting precipice.
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
Lock Katrine lay beneath him rolled;
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light;
And mountains that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Ben-venue
Down to the lake in masses threw
Crags, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world;
A 'wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruined sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, 'raptured and amazed.
And, 'What a scene is here," he cried,
'For princely pomp, or churchman's pride!
On this bold brow, a lordly tower,
In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
On yonder meadow, far away
The turrets of a cloister gray.
How blithely might the bugle horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
Chime, when the groves are still and mute!
And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matin's distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell—

And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
Should each bewildered stranger call
To friendly feast and lighted hall.

. . . . .

Presently he winds his bugle again, and the Lady of the Lake, Ellen Douglas, thinking the note came from another and an expected visitor, comes to meet him across the lake. Her portrait is touched with rare and Homeric delicacy.

(Stanzas 17–19.)

With head upraised, and look intent,
And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art,
In listening mood she seemed to stand
The guardian Naiad of the strand.

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow:
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had trained her pace,—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew;
E'en the slight hare-bell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread!
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue,
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The list'ner held his breath to hear.

A chieftain's daughter seemed the maid;
Her satin snood, her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch such birth betray'd.
And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing;

And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
Mantled a plaid with modest care;
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.
Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true
Than every free-born glance confessed
The guileless movements of her breast;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claimed a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion poured a prayer,
Or tale of injury called forth
The indignant spirit of the north.
One only passion, unrevealed,
With maiden pride the maid concealed,
Yet not less purely felt the flame;—
Oh, need I tell that passion's name?

The knight who is the hero of the tale, returning again to the glen, learns that he is waylaid, and that his guide has betrayed him. He slays the traitor, and, proceeding alone on his path, in the twilight falls in with a mountaineer, beside a watchfire, whom he conceives to be a follower of Roderick Dhu, a chieftain in rebellion against the king, against whom for other reasons he himself has vowed an enmity only to be appeased by personal conflict. The following extract begins with the last lines of his avowal of his hostile purpose; which is replied to by the mountaineer, who is Roderick himself, summoning all his clansmen, who are lurking around. The energy of the stanzas which relate the uprising and disappearance of the clansmen, is equalled by few passages of any poet.

(Canto v. stanzas 8–10.)

'Enough, I am by promise tied
To match me with this man of pride;
Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen
In peace; but when I come again,
I come with banner, brand, and bow,
As leader seeks his mortal foe.

For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,
As I, until before me stand
This rebel chieftain and his band.'

'Have, then, thy wish!'—he whistled shrill,
And he was answered from the hill;
Wild as the scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew.
Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets, and spears, and bended bows,
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;
From shingles grey their lances start,
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow-wand
Are bristling into axe and brand,
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior armed for strife
That whistle garrison'd the glen
At once with full five hundred men,
As if the yawning hill to heaven
A subterranean host had given.
Watching their leader's beck and will,
All silent there they stood and still,
Like the loose crags, whose threatening mass
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,
As if an infant's touch could urge
Their headlong passage down the verge,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain side they hung.
The mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fixed his high and sable brow
Full on Fitz-James—'How say'st thou now?
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;
And, Saxon, I am Roderick Dhu!'

Fitz-James was brave: though to his heart
The life-blood thrilled with sudden start,
He mann'd himself with dauntless air,
Returned the chief his haughty stare,
His back against a rock he bore,
And firmly placed his foot before:

'Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I!'
Sir Roderick marked, and in his eyes,
Respect was mingled with surprise
And the stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel.
Short space he stood, then waved his hand;
Down sank the disappearing band;
Each warrior vanished where he stood,
In broom or bracken, heath or wood;
Sank brand, and spear, and bended bow
In osiers pale and copses low;
It seemed as if their mother earth
Had swallowed up her warlike birth.
The wind's last breath had tossed in air
Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair—
The next but swept a lone hill-side,
Where heath and fern were waving wide;
The sun's last glance was glinted back,
From spear and glaive, from targe and Jack—
The next, all unreflected, shone
On bracken green and cold grey stone.

The knight is King James himself in disguise. And the following stanzas relate his discovery of himself to Ellen when she has gone to the Court to implore pardon for her father and Roderick. They are as full of grace and high-breeding as those last quoted are redolent of courage and magnanimity.

(Canto vi. stanza 26.)

Within 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright;
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer even,
And from their tissue fancy frames
Aerial knights and fairy dames.
Still by Fitz-James her footing stayed;
A few faint steps she forward made,
Then slow her drooping head she raised,
And fearful round the presence gazed;
For him she sought, who owned this state,
The dreaded prince whose will was fate!
She gazed on many a princely port,
Might well have ruled a royal court;

On many a splendid garb she gazed—
Then turned bewildered and amazed,
For all stood bare; and, in the room,
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
To him each lady's look was lent,
On him each courtier's eye was bent;
Midst furs, and silks, and jewels' sheen,
He stood in simple Lincoln green
The centre of the glittering ring—
And Snowdoun's knight is Scotland's king!

If 'Marmion' be not Scott's finest poem, which however is, I think, a question, there is no doubt that it contains the finest passages of any of his poems. The two following extracts present even a more striking specimen of his versatility than those quoted from the 'Lady of the Lake.' The grace of the description of Lady Heron, the tender reverence with which the beautiful and virtuous but neglected Queen is portrayed in her lonely and sorrowful retirement, exhibit a wonderful contrast with the splendid energy with which the battle of Flodden is related: a description which (as the Edinburgh reviewer, Jeffrey, truly said) had never been equalled since Homer told how Achilles drove back the cowering Trojans to the Scœan gates.

(Marmion, canto v. stanzas 10, 11.)

O'er James's heart, the courtiers say,
Sir Hugh the Heron's wife held sway:
To Scotland's court she came,
To be a hostage for her lord,
Who Cessford's gallant heart had gored,
And with the King to make accord,
Had sent his lovely dame.
Nor to that lady free alone
Did the gay king allegiance own;
For the fair Queen of France
Sent him a turquoise ring, and glove,
And charged him, as her knight and love,
For her to break a lance;
And strike three strokes with Scottish brand,
And march three miles on Southron land
And bid the banners of his band
In English breezes dance.

And thus for France's Queen, he drest
His manly limbs in mailèd vest;
And thus admitted English fair
His inmost counsels still to share;
And thus, for both, he madly planned
The ruin of himself and land!
  And yet, the sooth to tell,
Nor England's fair, nor France's Queen,
Were worth one pearl-drop, bright and sheen,
  From Margaret's eyes that fell,—
His own Queen Margaret, who, in Lithgow's bower,
All lonely sat, and wept the weary hour.

The Queen sits lone in Lithgow pile,
  And weeps the weary day,
The war against her native soil,
Her monarch's risk in battle broil:
And in gay Holy Rood, the while,
Dame Heron rises with a smile,
  Upon the harp to play.
Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
  The strings her fingers flew:
And as she touched and tuned them all,
Even her bosom's rise and fall
  Was plainer given to view;
For all, for heat, was laid aside,
Her wimple, and her hood untied.
And first she pitched her voice to sing,
Then glanced her dark eye on the King,
And then around the silent ring;
And laughed, and blushed, and oft did say,
Her pretty oath, by Yea, and Nay,
She could not, would not, durst not play!
At length, upon the harp, with glee,
Mingled with arch simplicity,
A soft, yet lively air she rung,
While thus the wily lady sung.

(Canto vi. stanzas 25–27.)

'Unworthy office here to stay!
No hope of gilded spurs to-day.
But, see! look up—on Flodden bent,
The Scottish foe has fired his tent.'

And sudden, as he spoke,
From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till,
Was wreathed in sable smoke.
Volumed and vast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,
As down the hill they broke;
Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,
At times a stifled hum,
Told England, from his mountain throne
King James did rushing come.
Scarce could they hear, or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust;
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air.
Oh, life and death were in the shout,
Recoil and rally, charge and rout,
And triumph and despair.
Long looked the anxious squires; their eye
Could in the darkness nought descry.

At length the freshening western blast
Aside the shroud of battle cast;
And first the ridge of mingled spears
Above the brightening cloud appears;
And in the smoke the pennons flew,
As in the storm the white sea-mew,
Then marked they, dashing broad and far
The broken billows of the war,
And plumèd crests of chieftains brave,
Floating like foam upon the wave;
But nought distinct they see:
Wide raged the battle on the plain;
Spears shook, and faulchions flashed amain;
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain;
Crests rose, and stooped, and rose again,
Wild and disorderly,
Amid the scene of tumult, high

They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly:
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
Still bear them bravely in the fight;
  Although against them come,
Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a stubborn Highlandman,
And many a rugged Border clan,
  With Huntley and with Home.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle;
Though there the western mountaineer
Rushed with bare bosom on the spear
And flung the feeble targe aside,
And with both hands the broadsword plied.
'Twas vain. But Fortune, on the right,
With fickle smile, cheered Scotland's fight.
Then fell that spotless banner white,
  The Howard's lion fell;
Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew,
With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
  Around the battle yell.

CHAPTER XVII.

BYRON.

A.D. 1788–1824

We have seen that, according to Scott's own statement, one of his reasons for relinquishing poetical composition was the perception that a new luminary had arisen whose light the public preferred to his own. In age Byron was the younger by seventeen years, but he was only six years later in making his appearance as an original poet of the highest class, as only that interval elapsed between the publication of the 'Lay' and the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold.' He was born on January 22, 1788, just 100 years after Pope, being the heir of one of the Conqueror's Norman barons, whose descendants had been promoted to an English peerage by Charles I., who had no more devoted or gallant adherent than the first Lord Byron. On his mother's side he was still more nobly descended, his mother having been a Miss Gordon of Gight in Scotland, who traced her pedigree back to the royal line of the Stuarts and Bruces. But this man, whose birth and circumstances placed him so high above all the other writers of whom I have spoken or shall have to speak, was, as if by some strange freak of the goddess who, to vary his own expression,

> ———never yet of human fortune,
> Left the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis,

in many most important respects the most unfortunate and unhappy of all. Yet the very same cause to which, in all probability, his diseased temper (that temper which made him quarrel with all the world, and with himself also) may be traced, existed in a greater degree in Walter Scott. Scott, as I have mentioned, was crippled in one leg; but his misfortune never affected his manly spirit and genial temper for

a single hour. Byron, from his birth, had a slightly deformed foot. The malformation was so slight that not only did it not interfere with his activity, for he excelled in exercises that eminently required both firm footing and quickness, but that after his death his friends could not recollect which foot had been affected. But trifling as it was, he believed from his childhood that it was his one characteristic on which everyone's attention was fixed, and that it made him an object of general scorn, which he was bound to be prompt and watchful in retaliating. Much of the difference of feeling with which the two poets regarded their defect was, no doubt, caused by the difference in their parents' conduct. Scott's, with judicious kindness, took every means that science or affection could suggest to remedy the evil. Byron's mother, a woman of violent passions, never omitted any opportunity of taunting him with his deformity. Captain Byron, the poet's father, was a profligate man, who deserted his wife as soon as he had squandered the whole of her fortune, and died in France when his son was three years old; and, for some years afterwards, Mrs. Byron lived at Aberdeen in exceedingly narrow circumstances; but, in 1794, the death of the only lineal descendant of the existing Lord Byron, her husband's uncle, left her son heir to the peerage; and, in 1795, the peer himself died, and the future poet succeeded to the title, and to the family estate of Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire. He could now afford a better education than was to be obtained in Scotland; and, as soon as he was fit for an English public school, he was sent to Harrow, where the chief impression which he made on the masters seems to have been that he had a remarkable talent for oratory, or at least for the delivery of speeches and declamations, and on his schoolfellows that he was a ready fighter and a good cricketer. But he was not yet suspected of any inclination 'to subside into poesy,' as he calls it, though in fact he had written verses enough to make a small volume, which, with a few additions, he published soon after his removal to Trinity College, Cambridge. He called them 'Hours of Idleness,' and they neither bear the marks of much labour, nor of any very remarkable talent;

certainly, they give no promise of the genius which was hereafter to be developed; though, on the other hand, they are equally far from deserving the unusually spiteful attack which Mr. Brougham made on them in the 'Edinburgh Review.' Byron, from his childhood, was proud, but he was also vain (a rare combination), and he was likewise throughout his life so sensitive to blame that, even when his fame was fully established, he avowed to a friend that the disparaging comments of the lowest or most incapable judges caused him more pain than the commendation of the best and wisest gave him pleasure. But the criticism of the 'Edinburgh' (which, if candour be an ingredient in criticism, is really undeserving of the name) missed its mark by the very violence with which it was aimed. It angered him; it exasperated him; and prompted him at once to resolve on retaliation, and he retaliated in a satire, 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' in which, however, he ran amuck like a Malay, dealing his blows alike on those who had and those who had not offended him. The Edinburgh reviewers had given him abundant provocation, but the poets had given him none; and among these were men of undoubted genius, some of whose works in his soberer years he warmly admired and honestly extolled. But on this occasion he assailed all, Scott and Crabbe equally with Jeffrey; not scrupling to enter into subjects with which no third person had any right to concern himself at all, as, for instance, into the price a publisher had given for a poem; but, at the same time, seasoning his attacks with a very keen wit, and displaying a command of language and a power of versification from which many, even of his victims, augured great things in future. Comparatively speaking, they had not long to wait. The satire was published at the beginning of 1809, when he was just one-and-twenty. As soon as he had concluded some arrangements necessary to be completed on his coming of age, he went abroad, travelling for a couple of years, first in Spain and Portugal, and afterwards in Greece; and he brought back with him a poem on the countries which he had visited, of which he himself had formed no high opinion, preferring to it indeed another satire, which he had also

written in the interval, but which was little more than a paraphrase of Horace's 'Art of Poetry.' Luckily, however, some friends to whom he showed his descriptive poem had a sounder judgment; they persuaded him to lock up the 'Hints from Horace' in his bureau, and to publish his 'Childe Harold' with Murray. It came out at the beginning of 1812. Its reception by the public can hardly be better described than it was by himself, when he said, 'he awoke one morning, and found himself famous.' Even the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' had scarcely made a greater impression; and for some years his literary career was a series of triumphs absolutely unequalled in the history of literature. The next year produced the 'Giaour' and the 'Bride of Abydos;' the spring of 1814 saw the publication of the 'Corsair;' that was followed by 'Lara;' the 'Siege of Corinth,' 'Parisina,' the 'Prisoner of Chillon,' with several poems of smaller dimensions, followed in rapid succession. 1816 produced a third, 1818 a fourth and concluding canto of 'Childe Harold;' and the daily increasing body of readers could scarcely admire and praise them with sufficient warmth. If fame and popularity could have cheered a morbid spirit, no one ever had more of them for a time. But he refused to be comforted; and his popularity was but short-lived. Even while the admiration of his poetry continued as unanimous and cordial as ever, the world of fashion suddenly turned against the poet. At the beginning of 1815 he married a young lady of very great expectations, a Miss Milbanke, the only daughter of a Northumberland baronet. She was not deficient in other gifts besides those of fortune, neither in personal attractions nor in accomplishments; but those who knew him best did not anticipate that the marriage would produce much happiness to either party, and dismal forebodings have rarely been more completely realised. It was not a love match on either side; for the lady had refused him at least once, and his last proposal, when she accepted him, was made on the very morning that he had received a refusal in another quarter. He had been ardently in love once, when he was little more than a boy, with a distant cousin of his own, a Miss Chaworth, between whose branch

of the family and his own there had been a deadly quarrel at one time, owing to the last lord having killed a Mr. Chaworth in a duel; and Byron flattered himself that a marriage with her would be reckoned especially desirable by their common relatives, as healing a family feud; but she had married a still nearer kinsman, and namesake of her own; and it does not seem that, since she had been lost to him, anyone else had ever excited any warmer feelings in his heart than a passing fancy. It would be to no purpose, even were it possible, which it certainly is not, to explain the causes that made the union that did take place miserable. The only fact that is beyond question is that they had scarcely been married more than a twelvemonth, and their only child, a daughter, was little more than six weeks old, when Lady Byron left him for ever. She never explained what offence or injury had moved her to take such a step; and he declared, with every mark of sincerity, that he was wholly ignorant what provocation she imagined herself to have received.

But it was not only, as was inevitable, most unfortunate for his future comfort, but very fatal to his character. He went abroad: first to Switzerland, where the mountain scenery, for which his early bringing up among the Scotch Highlands had given him an indelible preference, suggested to him a new canto of 'Childe Harold,' and one or two other poems; and from the Alps he moved on to Italy, where he passed several years in a most ostentatious licentiousness; redeemed in part by an extreme and generally judicious beneficence towards all who stood in need of assistance; and embellished by a continued outpouring of magnificent poetry of all kinds: a fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' of which the scene is laid in Italy, surpassing all its predecessors; dramas, not intended nor suited for theatrical representation, but for the most part brilliant with all his characteristic beauties; burlesques, proving, what his social companions had long known, that wit and humour had been as largely bestowed on him as the loftier gifts of imagination; and one poem of great length, indeed unfinished when he died, which reflects but too often and too faithfully the excesses of his life, but which, as an

exhibition of almost every quality that can be required in a great work, has no equal in the English language. One of the most judicious critics of the day, himself enjoying no small popularity as 'a brother of the quill,' and one by no means inclined to overlook the grievous faults which have caused 'Don Juan' to be almost proscribed, nevertheless admits it to be 'by far the most admirable specimen of the mixture of ease, strength, gaiety, and seriousness extant in the whole body of English poetry.' That much of the licence which he permitted himself in the work was prompted by a recklessness and spirit of vehement defiance of a world by which he felt he had been undeservedly condemned, is unquestionable; it is equally certain that he was not without some right to complain. It was not known why he and his wife had quarrelled, nor on which side the fault lay; but the fashionable world in London, whose verdict was followed by that of the rest of the nation, without hearing either party, for indeed neither had spoken, had decided not only that he was alone to blame, but that the offence by which he had compelled the lady to abandon him was of some peculiarly unpardonable character. To quote a statement of his own made many years afterwards, 'the outcry against him was beyond all precedent, all parallel, even in those cases where political notions have sharpened slander and doubled enmity: he was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour.' Even after he quitted England, in other countries he was unremittingly pursued by the same intensity of calumny; and compared himself, when sitting by the Adriatic, to 'the stag at bay, who betakes him to the waters' as the only refuge from the hunters who seek his lifeblood. Such provocation may be a palliation for much error, but is no excuse for such perversity as is visible in too much of 'Don Juan.' Happily the last years of his life present him to us in a different aspect. The Greeks were just beginning to acquire courage to throw off the Turkish yoke, which had so long weighed down the country so dear to the recollections of every scholar. And in the spring of 1823, Byron, having already discussed the probability of success with a Captain Blaquière, the agent of a committee

which had been formed in London with the object of aiding the Greeks, conceived the idea of crossing over to Greece in person, and carried it out with characteristic promptitude. Early in July he sailed from Genoa; and landed at Cephalonia, where he stayed till the beginning of the next year, when he crossed over to Missolonghi. It was a new line of life for him; but he seems to have impressed all with whom he came in contact with the highest idea not only of his kindness of heart and general benevolence, but of his shrewd practical sagacity, judicious energy, and likewise of his tact in dealing with people of unpractical hopes, unbusinesslike habits, and unmanageable temper. His opinion of the Greek nation had not been improved by nearer acquaintance. On the contrary, he learned to doubt even their courage, and to feel convinced of their utter want of all the higher moral qualities; but he persevered in his desire to aid them, partly from his love of Liberty, which, however, his interpretation rendered too synonymous with liberalism, and partly no doubt from an innate obstinacy. But the Greeks did not doubt him for a moment. On the contrary, his arrival at Missolonghi was greeted with one universal acclamation, prompted, it may be fancied, chiefly by their expectations of what might be got out of him. He soon found that he was expected to act not only as commander-in-chief, but as paymaster also; but he was not daunted. To a disposition like his, which could hardly disguise from himself that his way of life in Italy was not a thing to be proud of, the change to a scene of honorable action, or at least of what a very little and very pardonable self-delusion might easily represent as such, must have been a welcome transition; and he was preparing to take the field when, early in April 1824, he was attacked by a fever. Though young in years he was old in constitution; he had latterly accustomed himself to drink ardent spirits in great quantities, and he had no strength to stand a severe illness. After a few days of severe suffering, he died on the 19th April; under circumstances which to charitable hearts may justify the hope that, if a longer life had been allowed to him, the remainder of his days would have been spent in a manner more worthy of his genius, and more corresponding

to the many good and noble qualities which he unquestionably possessed.

Our first extract shall be from the first canto of his 'Childe Harold,' a splendid description of the war in Spain, and of the Spanish character, which might well lead the critics to predict, as they did predict, a brilliant career for one who at the age of 22 could already display such power.

(Childe Harold, canto i. stanzas 53–57.)

And must they fall? the young, the proud, the brave,
To swell one bloated Chief's unwholesome reign?
No step between submission and a grave?
The rise of rapine and the fall of Spain?
And doth the Power that man adores ordain
Their doom, nor heed the suppliant's appeal?
Is all that desperate Valour acts in vain?
And Counsel sage, and patriotic Zeal,
The Veteran's skill, Youth's fire, and Manhood's heart of steel.

Is it for this the Spanish maid, aroused,
Hangs on the willow her unstrung guitar,
And, all unsex'd, the anlace hath espoused,
Sung the loud song, and dared the deed of war?
And she, whom once the semblance of a scar
Appall'd, an owlet's larum chill'd with dread,
Now views the column-scattering bay'net jar,
The falchion flash, and o'er the yet warm dead
Stalks with Minerva's step where Mars might quake to tread.

Ye who shall marvel when you hear her tale,
Oh! had you known her in her softer hour,
Mark'd her black eye that mocks her coal-black veil,
Heard her light, lively tones in Lady's bower,
Seen her long locks that foil the painter's power,
Her fairy form, with more than female grace,
Scarce would you deem that Saragoza's tower
Beheld her smile in Danger's Gorgon face,
Thin the closed ranks, and lead in Glory's fearful chase.

Her lover sinks—she sheds no ill-timed tear;
Her chief is slain—she fills his fatal post;
Her fellows flee—she checks their base career;
The foe retires—she heads the sallying host;

Who can appease like her a lover's ghost?
Who can avenge so well a leader's fall?
What maid retrieve when man's flushed hope is lost?
Who hang so fiercely on the flying Gaul,
Foil'd by a woman's hand, before a batter'd wall?

Yet are Spain's maids no race of Amazons,
But form'd for all the witching arts of love:
Though thus in arms they emulate her sons,
And in the horrid phalanx dare to move,
'Tis but the tender fierceness of the dove,
Pecking the hand that hovers o'er her mate.

The following stanza may serve to show how far his unhappy scepticism was removed from the daring impiety of others with whom his enemies maliciously sought to confound him.

(Canto ii. stanza 8.)

Yet if, as holiest men have deem'd, there be
A land of souls beyond that sable shore,
To shame the *doctrine of the Sadducee*
And sophists, *madly vain of dubious lore;*
How sweet it were *in concert to adore*
With those who made *our mortal labours light!*
To hear each voice we *fear'd to hear no more!*
Behold each mighty shade reveal'd to sight,
The Bactrian, Samian sage, and all who taught the right.

The second stanza of the following extract is not more distinguished for beauty of expression than for the extreme felicity with which the image is conceived.

(Canto iii. stanzas 32, 33.)

They mourn, but smile at length; and, smiling, mourn:
The tree will wither long before it fall;
The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn;
The rooftree sinks, but moulders on the hall
In massy hoariness; the ruined wall
Stands when its wind-worn battlements are gone;
The bars survive the captive they enthral;
The day drags through though storms keep out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on:

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies; and makes
A thousand images of one that was,
The same, and still the more, the more it breaks;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
Living in shatter'd guise, and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

The description of the battle of Waterloo is too long to quote, and too perfect to mutilate. It may give a better idea of the workings of Byron's mind to present his reflections on Napoleon himself, which show a singularly just estimate of the great conqueror, whom those of the party to which he had attached himself in general regarded with such unmingled admiration.

(Canto iii. stanzas 36–38.)

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,
Whose spirit antithetically mixt
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt,
Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to reassume the imperial mien,
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who woo'd thee once, thy vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deem'd thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low,
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield:
An empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,

But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skill'd,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of war,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star.

The following stanzas are equally distinguished for the richness of their poetry and a sort of indistinct, hesitating reverence which pervaded his mind, though unhappily not with sufficient clearness permanently or entirely to influence and purify it.

(Canto iii. stanzas 88–93.)

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most:
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is concenter'd in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are least alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty;—'twould disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek

The Spirit in whose honour shrines are weak,
Uprear'd of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy pray'r!

The sky is changed!—and such a change! O night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

. . . . . .

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb,—
And glowing into day: we may resume
The march of our existence: and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by
Much, that may give us pause, if ponder'd fittingly.

The third canto is, as it were, dedicated to his only daughter, and these stanzas are valuable as showing the sincerity of his affectionate feelings, and his yearnings after home and a purer life than he was leading, against his better consciousness.

(Canto iii. stanzas 115-117.)

My daughter! with thy name this song begun—
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end—
I see thee not,—I hear thee not,—but none
Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never should'st behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend
And reach into thy heart,—when mine is cold,—
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

To aid thy mind's development,—to watch,
Thy dawn of little joys,—to sit and see
Almost thy very growth,—to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This it should seem was not reserved for me;
Yet this was in my nature:—as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation,—and a broken claim:
Though the grave close between us,—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me; though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou would'st love me, still that more than life retain.

The following extracts, describing Rome and its varied fortunes, are among the most beautiful in the poem: as passages of descriptive beauty, they are probably unequalled in any modern language, while, as the second and third extracts show, no scenery or contemplation of outward things could long withdraw his mind from himself and his own condition.

(Canto iv. stanzas 78, 79).

Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
Whose agonies are evils of a day—
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
An empty urn within her withered hands,
Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago;
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless

Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,
Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

(Canto iv. stanza 121.)

Oh Love! no habitant of earth thou art—
An unseen seraph, we believe in thee,
A faith whose martyrs are the broken heart,
But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see
The naked eye, thy form, as it should be;
The mind hath made thee, as it peopled heaven,
Even with its own desiring phantasy,
And to a thought such shape and image given,
As haunts the unquench'd soul—parch'd—wearied—wrung
—and riven.

(Canto iv. stanza 130.)

Oh Time! the beautifier of the dead,
Adorner of the ruin, comforter
And only healer when the heart hath bled—
Time! the corrector where our judgments err,
The test of truth, love—sole philosopher,
For all beside are sophists, from thy thrift,
Which never loses though it does defer—
Time, the avenger! unto thee I lift
My hands, and eyes, and heart, and crave of thee a gift.

(Canto iv. stanzas 154, 155.)

But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone—with nothing like to thee—
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.
Since Zion's desolation, when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be,
Of earthly structures in his honour piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
And why? it is not lessen'd; but thy mind,
Expanded by the genius of the spot,
Has grown colossal, and can only find
A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
See thy God face to face, as thou dost now
His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by his brow.

The news of the death of the Princess Charlotte in her confinement reached him while he was penning the last stanzas of the poem; and national sorrow has never found a more powerful or truly sympathetic interpreter.

(Canto iv. stanzas 167-170.)

Hark! forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,
A long low distant murmur of dread sound,
Such as arises when a nation bleeds
With some deep and immedicable wound;
Through storm and darkness yawns the rending ground,
The gulf is thick with phantoms, but the chief
Seems royal still, though with her head discrown'd,
And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief
She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief.

Scion of chiefs and monarchs, where art thou?
Fond hope of many nations, art thou dead?
Could not the grave forget thee, and lay low
Some less majestic, less beloved head?
In the sad midnight, while thy heart still bled,
The mother of a moment, o'er thy boy,
Death hush'd that pang for ever: with thee fled
The present happiness and promised joy
Which filled the imperial isles so full it seem'd to cloy.

Peasants bring forth in safety.—Can it be,
Oh thou that wert so happy, so ador'd!
Those who weep not for kings shall weep for thee,
And Freedom's heart, grown heavy, cease to hoard
Her many griefs for One; for she had pour'd
Her orisons for thee, and o'er thy head
Beheld her Iris.—Thou, too, lonely lord,
And desolate consort—vainly wert thou wed!
The husband of a year! the father of the dead!

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;
Thy bridal's fruit is ashes: in the dust
The fair-hair'd Daughter of the Isles is laid,
The love of millions! How we did entrust
Futurity to her! and, though it must
Darken above our bones, yet fondly deem'd
Our children should obey her child, and bless'd
Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise seem'd
Like stars to shepherds' eyes:—'twas but a meteor beam'd.

With respect to the stanzas which follow, Professor Wilson writes: 'It was a thought worthy of the great spirit of Byron, after exhibiting to us his pilgrim amidst all the most striking scenes of earthly grandeur and earthly decay; after teaching us, like him, to sicken over the mutability and vanity and emptiness of human greatness, to conduct him and us at last to the borders of "the Great Deep." It is thus that we may perceive an image of the awful and unchangeable abyss of eternity into whose bosom so much has sunk, and all shall one day sink; of that eternity wherein the scorn and the contempt of man, and the melancholy of great and the fretting of little minds shall be at rest for ever.'

(Canto iv. stanzas 179–183.)

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war;
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?—
Thy waters wasted them while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play—
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving;—boundless, endless, and sublime—
The image of Eternity—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy shrine
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

The 'Giaour' is written almost wholly in the octo-syllabic metre, which Byron considered that Scott had made so completely his own. As he tells us in the preface, it is founded on an event which actually happened. The second canto of 'Childe Harold' had been devoted to Greece; but in this poem he reveals far more of the fascination which the country had for him, and which grew with him to the end of his life. The following passage, in which he compares the land once so powerful and glorious, and still so attractive, to a body in which, though the life has quitted it, the beauty still lingers, is one which has often been extolled both for its truth and for the exquisite skill with which the image is wrought out.

(The Giaour, line 68.)

He who hath bent him o'er the dead,
Ere the first day of death is fled;
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress;
(Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines were beauty lingers,
And mark'd the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there,

The fixed yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold Obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon;
Yes, but for these and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by death reveal'd!
Such is the aspect of this shore;
'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!
So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
We start, for soul is wanting there.
Hers is the loveliness in death,
That parts not quite with parting breath;
But beauty with that fearful bloom,
That hue which haunts it to the tomb,
Expression's last receding ray,
A gilded halo hovering round decay,
The farewell beam of feeling pass'd away!
Spark of that flame, perchance of heavenly birth,
Which gleams, but warms no more its cherished earth!

(The Giaour, line 388.[1])

As rising on its purple wing
The insect queen of eastern spring,

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[1] It may seem that Byron in some degree took the following description of the butterfly and its flight from the 'Dunciad':—

Of all the enamel'd race whose silvery wing
Waves to the tepid zephyrs of the spring,
Or swims along the fluid atmosphere,
Once brightest shined this child of heat and air;
I saw, and started from its vernal bower
The rising game, and chased from flower to flower;
It fled; I followed; now in hope, now pain;
It stopt, I stopt; it mov'd, I mov'd again;
At last it fixt; twas on what plant it pleased,
And when it fixt, the beauteous bird I seized.

O'er emerald meadows of Kashmeer
Invites the young pursuer near,
And leads him on from flower to flower
A weary chase and wasted hour,
Then leaves him, as it soars on high,
With panting heart and tearful eye:
So Beauty lures the full-grown child
With hue as bright, and wing as wild;
A chase of idle hopes and fears,
Begun in folly, closed in tears,
If won, to equal ills betrayed,
Woe waits the insect and the maid;
A life of pain, the loss of peace,
From infant's play, and man's caprice:
The lovely toy so fiercely sought
Has lost its charm by being caught,
For every touch that woo'd its stay
Has brush'd the brightest hues away,
Till charm, and hue, and beauty gone,
'Tis left to fly or fall alone.
With wounded wing, or bleeding breast,
Ah! where shall either victim rest?
Can this with faded pinion soar
From rose to tulip as before?
Or Beauty, blighted in an hour,
Find joy within her broken bower?
No: gayer insects fluttering by
Ne'er droop the wing o'er those that die,
And lovelier things have mercy shown
To every failing but their own,
And every woe a tear can claim
Except an erring sister's shame.

The 'Bride of Abydos' is chiefly in the same metre as the 'Giaour;' but the following passage in the ten-syllable verse of Dryden and Pope shows that metre to be capable of an energy which even Dryden could scarcely infuse into

---

Rose or carnation was beneath my care,
I meddle, goddess, only in my sphere;
I tell the naked fact without disguise,
And, to excuse it, need but show the prize,
Whose spoils this paper offers to your eye,
Fair ev'n in death, the peerless butterfly.—iv. 421.

it. It would be hard to find one in the language in which the feelings of passionate and at the same time pure love are expressed with greater spirit and force, combined with all possible tenderness and delicacy; while the rich profusion with which he throws off image after image is peculiar to Byron among modern poets.

(The Bride of Abydos, canto ii. stanza 20.)

Ay! let me like the ocean-Patriarch roam,
Or only know on land the Tartar's home!
My tent on shore, my galley on the sea,
Are more than cities and Serais to me:
Borne by my steed, or wafted by my sail,
Across the desert, or before the gale,
Bound where thou wilt, my barb! or glide, my prow!
But be the star that guides the wanderer, Thou!
Thou, my Zuleika, share and bless my bark—
The dove of peace and promise to mine ark!
Or, since that hope denied in worlds of strife,
Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life!
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray!
Blest—as the Muezzin's strain from Mecca's wall
To pilgrims pure and prostrate at his call;
Soft—as the melody of youthful days,
That steals the trembling tear of speechless praise;
Dear—as his native song to Exile's ears,
Shall sound each tone thy long-loved voice endears.
For thee in those bright isles is built a bower
Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour.
A thousand swords—with Selim's heart and hand,
Wait—wave—defend—destroy—at thy command!
Girt by my band, Zuleika at my side,
The spoil of nations shall bedeck my bride.
The Haram's languid years of listless ease
Are well resign'd for cares—for joys like these:
Not blind to fate, I see, where'er I rove,
Unnumber'd perils,—but one only love!
Yet well my toils shall that fond breast repay,
Though fortune frown, or falser friends betray.
How dear the dream in darkest hours of ill,
Should all be changed, to find thee *faithful still*!
Be but thy soul, like Selim's, firmly shown;
To thee be Selim's tender as thine own;

To soothe each sorrow, share in each delight,
Blend every thought, do all—but disunite!

The same mastery over the ten-syllable metre, which Byron displayed in parts of the 'Bride,' is shown more sustainedly in the 'Corsair.' In his hands it is completely free from the monotony of which it has been accused in Pope's hands; and from which Pope's precocious disciples, Goldsmith and Campbell, had not relieved it. In the following passages the variety of rhythm is very conspicuous, showing Byron almost as great in the mechanical department of his art as in the still more indispensable qualities of vivacity and power.

(The Corsair, canto i.)

O'er the glad waters of the deep blue sea.
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home!
These are our realms, no limits to their sway—
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
From toil to rest, and joy in every change.
Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!
Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;
Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
Whom slumber soothes not, pleasure cannot please—
Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danc'd in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?
That for itself can woo the approaching fight,
And turn what some deem danger to delight;
That seeks what cravens shun with more than zeal,
And where the feebler faint—can only feel—
Feel—to the rising bosom's inmost core,
Its hope awaken, and its spirit soar?
No dread of death—if with us die our foes—
Save that it seems even duller than repose:
Come when it will, we snatch the life of life—
When lost—what recks it—by disease or strife?
Let him who crawls enamour'd of decay,
Cling to his couch, and sicken years away;
Heave his thick breath, and shake his palsied head
Ours the fresh turf, and not the feverish bed.

While gasp by gasp he falters forth his soul,
Ours with one pang—one bound—escapes control,
His corse may boast its urn and narrow cave,
And they who loath'd his life may gild his grave:
Ours are the tears, though few, sincerely shed,
When ocean shrouds and sepulchres our dead.
For us, even banquets fond regret supply
In the red cup that crowns our memory;
And the brief epitaph in danger's day,
When those who win at length divide the prey,
And cry, Remembrance saddening o'er each brow,
How had the brave who fell exulted *now*!

(Canto ii. line 144.)

Up rose the Dervise with that burst of light,
Nor less his change of form appall'd the sight:
Up rose that Dervise—not in saintly garb,
But like a warrior bounding from his barb,
Dash'd his high cap, and tore his robe away—
Shone his mail'd breast, and flash'd his sabre's ray!
His close but glittering casque, and sable plume,
More glittering eye, and black brow's sabler gloom,
Glared on the Moslems' eyes some Afrit sprite,
Whose demon death-blow left no hope for fight.
The wild confusion, and the swarthy glow
Of flames on high, and torches from below:
The shriek of terror, and the mingling yell—
For swords began to clash, and shouts to swell,
Flung o'er that spot of earth the air of hell!
Distracted, to and fro, the flying slaves
Behold but bloody shore and fiery waves;
Nought heeded they the Pasha's angry cry,
They seize that Dervise!—seize on Zatanai!
He saw their terror—check'd the first despair
That urged him but to stand and perish there,
Since far too early and too well obey'd,
The flame was kindled ere the signal made;
He saw their terror—from his baldric drew
His bugle—brief the blast—but shrilly blew;
'Tis answer'd,—'Well ye speed, my gallant crew!
Why did I doubt their quickness of career?
And deem design had left me single here?
Sweeps his long arm—that sabre's whirling sway,
Sheds fast atonement for its first delay;
Completes his fury, what their fear begun,
And makes the many basely quail to one.

If we compare Scott with Byron (and when two contemporaries stand so clearly at the head of all the poets of the century the comparison seems almost forced upon us), I think we may say that Scott exhibits a far greater variety of character, that Byron displays greater power in drawing a single portrait. In the expression of deep emotion and vehement passion, Byron is far beyond his rival. As a painter of energetic action and chivalrous feelings, rousing to deeds of heroism, he is almost as far below him. Scott's women, too, are drawn with far more delicacy and discrimination than Byron's; for, though Byron has a keen feeling for their attractions, and even for their higher qualities; and though, as has been said by a not unfriendly critic, his poems all seem to inculcate the principle that love is a virtue, yet the love which he paints is an Oriental love, deficient in the chivalrous and dignifying attributes which are peculiar to the Christian civilisation of western Europe, where alone woman is looked upon as a being endowed with qualities as high and ennobling as, though differing from, those of her lord, and where the affection with which she is regarded is indeed inseparable from respect. On the other hand, in prodigal richness of imagination, in condensed force of expression, Byron must be pronounced unequalled even by Scott, or by any other of those whom we boast as the mightiest masters of the language. His ear for rhythm was infinitely more accurate. Few indeed are the unmusical lines in Byron; not a few passages, and those of great length, are unmatched for melody; while Scott, though at times more powerful than Byron in the variety which he has thrown into the octosyllabic metre, is often apparently careless and certainly is often harsh and rugged. If we measure both by a severely critical standard, by the degree in which they severally display the qualities which are admitted to be of the highest necessity in a great poem, we must probably affirm Byron to be the greater poet. If we judge them by the degree in which they appeal to and move our feelings, and move those most which are best and purest, the palm must be assigned to Scott. And we may probably decide that, while Byron had the more powerful genius, Scott has pro-

duced the more delightful works. I have left out of consideration many matters which are often imported into an estimate of this kind, such as the moral purity of each; because in fact there is no taint of licentiousness in the poems of Byron from which alone extracts have been given; and though there are passages, especially in 'Childe Harold,' which reveal the unhappy scepticism which agitated the mind and clouded the happiness of the poet himself, they are wholly free from the imputation of being designed to make converts. They even show a wish to be able to believe more fully, and demand pity rather than condemnation. On the whole it must be admitted that even the finest passages of Byron breathe a lower tone than Scott's, and fail in an equal degree to refine or elevate the feelings.

SHELLEY.

A.D. 1792–1822.

Of the life of him with whom we close our examination we will forbear to speak. Percy Bysshe Shelley was so unfortunate as not only to be indifferent or hostile to religion, but to glory in his impiety in a way that can only be looked upon with so indulgent a feeling as compassion by those who remember that he did not live to reach his thirtieth birthday; but his poetical genius was freely confessed by those who viewed his profession of atheism with the deepest disgust. He was unquestionably gifted with a genius inferior only to that of Byron among those who at the time of his death were still wooing the Muse; and the following passage from his elegy on his friend Keats, a youthful poet of no inconsiderable promise, who had recently died of a decline, may be sufficient to show the richness of his fancy and tenderness of his pathos, and his perfect mastery of the mechanical parts of his art, copiousness of language and melody of rhythm.

(Adonais.—Elegy on the Death of John Keats.)

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow; say: with me
Died Adonais till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness! where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died! With veilèd eyes,
'Mid list'ning echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone where all things wise and fair
Descend:—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb:
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time

In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

But now thy youngest, dearest one, has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love tears instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom whose petals nipt before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

To that high Capitol, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale Court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

Oh, weep for Adonais.—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, nor find a home again.

And one with trembling hand clasps his cold head.
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
'Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some dream has loosened from his brain.'
Lost angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own, as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs, as if embalming them;
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw,
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

. . . . . .

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aërial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew around, sobbing in their dismay.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain they pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the solemn year!

To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear,
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou Adonais; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain,
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth, with morning doth complain.
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee; the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest.

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

. . . . . .

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn

He lives, he wakes,—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. Thou, young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns, and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou, Air,
Which like a morning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of Night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear,
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees, and beasts, and men into the Heaven's light.

. . . . . .

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou should'st now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love

Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast, and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar!
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BACON.

A.D. 1561–1626.

THE great superiority of the modern to the old philosophy is due to two of our countrymen, far above all others, Bacon and Newton. Of the latter it will not come within our plan to speak; but the former, besides his philosophical works, which, in order to secure a wider circulation among the students of many countries, he usually wrote in Latin, published a volume of essays which justify the gracing our list of composers of such writings with his name. It would be well for his fame had he been only a philosopher and an author; for the history of no man presents a more striking and more melancholy contrast between his principles and his practice than Bacon affords in his inculcation of all that is manly, virtuous, upright, and magnanimous, while exemplifying in his own conduct all that is base, treacherous, ungrateful, and sordid.

He was a man born in what the French used to call La Noblesse de la Robe; that is, of a family which had been previously distinguished by attaining the highest honours of the law; his father Sir Nicholas Bacon having been the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal for more than twenty years. It was shortly after he first received it that his son Francis was born in January 1561. His infancy gave little promise of his attaining the comparatively long life which was granted to him, since his health was peculiarly delicate; a circumstance that perhaps contributed to give him an early inclination to study, which in robuster natures finds so many more powerful allurements to combat and often to overpower it. From the very first moment the subjects which most attracted his attention showed the bias of his mind towards philosophical investigation; and a story is told of

his being missed by his playmates, and being found in a vault in the neighbourhood, endeavouring to ascertain the cause of an echo. Youths in that day were sent to the University at an age at which they now go to school; and Bacon was not thirteen when he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge; of which his father, and his uncle, Elizabeth's celebrated minister Lord Burleigh, had formerly been members. After taking his degree, he travelled for a year or two on the Continent, but returned to England on the death of his father, which happened when he was little more than nineteen, and entered Gray's Inn as a student of law. While in France his attention had been chiefly given to statistics and diplomacy; and he would greatly have preferred some official appointment which would have allowed him to devote himself to literature and politics; and such a post he endeavoured to obtain from his all-powerful uncle. But Burleigh, with all his craft and wariness, which the skill with which he so long guided the vessel of the State among the most troubled waters seems to elevate into wisdom and statesmanship, was essentially a mean-spirited man: he had acuteness enough to discern extraordinary abilities in his nephew, and baseness enough to envy and to desire to stifle them, lest they should interfere with the promotion of his own son Robert, whom he destined to succeed him, who, to say the truth, had talents sufficient to warrant the father in forming high anticipations of his success in life, and who, combined as those talents were with a courage and firmness of which Bacon was destitute, was certainly better fitted than his more contemplative cousin to be the minister of a new sovereign and a new dynasty.

No record has been preserved of his early career as a barrister; but he evidently met with considerable success: he was made a bencher of Gray's Inn at twenty-five; four years later he received a silk gown; and before he was thirty-two he had acquired a sufficient fortune to enable him to afford to enter Parliament as a county member, being elected as representative of Middlesex in the election of 1593. In this new position he speedily established a high reputation for eloquence, but unluckily he showed at the same time the servility of his spirit, making the most abject

apologies to the Prime Minister and the Lord Keeper, whose favour, as the head of the law, he judged almost of equal importance, because on one occasion, when the Crown asked for a subsidy of unusual amount, he had ventured to question the prudence of the demand, founding his objections on arguments deduced from the strictest principles of the constitution. It would seem that he obtained his pardon from the Court, for when, the next year, the office of Attorney-General became vacant, and the Earl of Essex, to whom, on seeing the favour with which Elizabeth regarded him, he had attached himself, endeavoured to procure it for him, pressing his request on Burleigh with all his wonted energy, he was refused, on the ground, not of his friend's freedom of speech, but of his youth and 'rawness': though he was in fact a few months older than Robert Cecil, who almost at the same time attained the far more responsible office of Secretary of State. Unable to make him Attorney, the gallant young Earl, indefatigable in the cause of his friends, sought to procure him the post next in honour of Solicitor-General. Being baffled in that too by the constant jealousy of the Cecils, he presented him with an estate worth 2,000*l.*, a sum of no small importance in that age, to compensate him for his disappointment; and when, in 1596, he sailed to Spain to conduct the attack on Cadiz, he charged the influential friends he left behind to watch over Bacon's interests as over his own. Essex's was a brief career; and the next, the closing passages of it, if dispassionately weighed, cover Bacon's memory with deeper disgrace, as showing a worse heart than even the corruption which brought on him public and more notorious dishonour. Essex had been bound to him by no ties of relationship or previous friendship when, from admiration of his great capacity, he put himself forward to advance his interests. When his influence with Court and Minister failed, he had enriched him at his own expense; yet, when, by his rash violence, the Earl had rendered himself liable to a prosecution for treason, Bacon not only did not scruple to appear as counsel for the prosecution, but exerted the whole of his argumentative skill and rhetorical ability to blacken his case, and to deprive any excuses which his advocates

might make for him not only of all legal but of all moral validity. And, when he had perished on the scaffold, he exerted a further and most foul ingenuity in defaming his character; drawing up, for the gratification of the Queen, 'a declaration of the practices and treasons, attempted and committed by Robert, Earl of Essex.' More shameless ingratitude is recorded against no man; even Bacon himself was ashamed of, or at least repented of it, when he found that all the Court favour which his baseness had won for him could not shield him from universal reprobation; and after the Queen's death, when a new sovereign was on the throne, he sought to excuse his conduct by a tract in the form of 'A Letter to the Earl of Devon.' His arguments, though his ingenuity was sharpened by self-interest, were worthless enough; but time did more for him than his logic: the exciting events of the succeeding years threw those which were older, though by a very few years, into comparative oblivion; few care long to preserve the recollection of offences which have been committed only against the dead; and Bacon presently attained the offices which he had coveted, without, so far as is known, any reproaches being levelled against his earlier prostitution of his legal knowledge and his oratorical powers. In 1607 he became Solicitor-General; in 1612 he was promoted to the place of Attorney. But before this, and even before his treachery to Essex, he had begun to lay the foundation of a fame far greater and more enduring than is within the reach of any mere lawyer by works of literature. In 1597 he published the volume of essays which I have already mentioned, and which were not only his 'earliest visitation but his last;' since he was throughout his life revising, re-editing, and making additions to them; the last edition, which he published only a few months before his death, supplying abundant evidence of his appreciation of the value of an elegant style, in the superior polish which he gave his latest compositions. They have retained their popularity to the present day. Yet no writings can less resemble those which the existing generation calls essays. The aim of a modern writer is to exhaust his subject, to discuss it with a completeness which shall leave nothing more to be said of

it. Bacon formed his idea of what an essay should be from the strict meaning of the word: an attempt 'at a subject;' a slight sketch of it; a set of hints suggesting further reflections to the reader: so that his essays are little more than brief but most pregnant texts, to be pondered on and enlarged upon by others. And a great logician and rhetorician of the last generation, Archbishop Whately, who in his last years edited them with great care, thought that he was acting strictly in accordance with the intentions of the author when he illustrated them with annotations greatly exceeding the originals in bulk. The year 1605 saw the commencement of a still greater work. In that same year which witnessed the defeat of the machinations of the Jesuits for the overthrow of the Reformed religion in these kingdoms, Bacon laid the foundation of a new secular philosophy which was destined for the future to exert an influence over the minds and conditions of men second only to that which in still higher matters had been already established over them by Luther and his followers. He published the treatise on the 'Proficience and Advancement of Learning, divine and human,' which in a subsequent edition he expanded into a larger work, rewriting it in Latin, and giving it the Latin name, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*: wishing it to be regarded not as a complete work, but as only the first part of a treatise in six parts, which should smooth the way to the attainment of all knowledge. The second part he called *Novum Organum*, the new instrument, in which he fully developed the inductive system; the third, *Sylva Sylvarum*, was devoted to the facts and phenomena of natural science, including observations made by himself, many of which, however, are incorrect, and bear out the criticism of Whately that he is not entitled to rank high as a natural philosopher. The fourth, *Scala Intellectûs*, was so called from its pointing out the succession of steps by which the understanding may reach its end in the investigations it undertakes. The other parts he did not live to complete. But what he did complete has established his fame on an eminence which has been attained by but one man besides. The task which he proposed to himself may be said to have been a harder one

than it would have been to lead men's minds to the study of philosophy if they had never heard of such a thing. He undertook to reclaim them from a wrong path to a right one; from a course sanctified by the great men who had travelled on it with patience and industry, who had embellished it with every resource of genius, who had recommended it by all that imagination and eloquence could furnish to allure and to convince, but which had been barren of fruit, which had not led to a single discovery that could benefit mankind in practical life, to a new road utterly destitute of all ancient patronage, and which he could only recommend by proclaiming that it should lead its followers to a goal which Plato and Seneca considered alien to the pursuits and beneath the notice of a wise man. Our space forbids our entering into a detailed examination of his philosophical labours; and we may content ourselves here with quoting a brief panegyric on the *Novum Organum*, in which Professor Playfair, a most competent judge, has summed up his merits, and our obligations to his labours: 'The power and compass of a mind which could form such a plan beforehand, and trace not merely the outline but many of the minute ramifications of sciences which did not yet exist, must be an object of admiration to all succeeding ages. . . . . Nor was it a slight benefit to turn the attention of philosophical enquirers from speculations and disputes upon questions remote from use to investigations having reference to works calculated to affect and benefit the life of man.'

And it must enhance our admiration of the intellect which could undertake and accomplish this, to recollect that he who displayed it was no solitary student able to devote his whole time to such labours, but a busy lawyer and politician, occupied with clients, and suitors, and official duties; and only devoting to philosophy the few and interrupted moments which he could spare from the toil, far more ignoble, but equally dear to his spirit, of fawning upon courtiers and caressing princes. It is painful to add that the conduct by which he sought the favour of the favourite (for in the Court of the worthless James no one could rise without the protection of the favourite) was distinguished by something worse than mere servility: by the most open

injustice, corruption, and cruelty. To secure his further promotion he did not scruple, as Attorney-General, to put to the torture an aged clergyman, in the vain hope of wringing from his agony expressions which might support as ridiculous a charge of treason as ever was preferred. As Lord Chancellor he was convicted of having habitually taken bribes to influence his decision in the cases which came before him, and was branded by the unanimous sentence of his brother peers as unworthy ever again to hold office in the State, or to assist in their deliberations. For, on his appointment as Chancellor, he had been ennobled as Baron Verulam, and shortly afterwards had received an additional step in the peerage as Viscount St. Albans.[1] In the long list of those who have adorned the Bench in the different Courts of Westminster Hall, but one other judge has been stigmatised with similar infamy; not the less degrading because the partiality of the King, under the influence of Buckingham, who was not likely to see disgrace in any mode of acquiring wealth, almost instantly remitted all the penalties which had been imposed upon him.

However, he never resumed his seat in Parliament, but spent his last years in the prosecution of those labours for which even his contemporaries were inclined to pardon his errors, and for which posterity has almost ignored them.

[1] There are few things much more strange than the mistake which prevails as to his title. He is almost invariably spoken of as Lord Bacon. Lord Macaulay, in the elaborate article on him which is published among his Essays, has made a curious mistake in a sentence intended to apologise for or explain the error. 'Posterity has felt that the greatest of English philosophers could derive no accession of dignity from any title which James could bestow, and, in defiance of the royal letters patent, has obstinately refused to degrade Francis Bacon into Viscount St. Albans.' But, without stopping to discuss the propriety of representing a British peerage, honestly earned, as a degradation, the mistake usually made is not that of calling him Francis Bacon, a name by which he was at one time universally known, but *Lord* Bacon, a title by which he was never in his lifetime known for a single moment; while, if a great philosopher was really degraded by a peerage, it is hard to see how the degradation can have been less if the title conferred had been Lord Bacon, which it was not, than Viscount St. Albans, which it was. The very article in question (to which the writer has been indebted for portions of this sketch) is entitled 'Lord Bacon.'

One of his works, indeed, composed at this time, his history of Henry VII., is of no great authority; but he commenced a digest of the Laws of England, a work of the greatest importance, and one which the philosophical reflections of such a commentator would have stamped with a peculiar value; and he continued adding to, improving, and polishing his Essays and his *Novum Organum*. His death was even directly caused by his devotion to his favourite pursuit. In the words of Lord Macaulay, 'the great apostle of experimental philosophy was destined to be its martyr.' He had conceived the idea that snow would act as a preservative of animal substances; and to test the truth of his conjecture, in the spring of 1626 he stuffed a fowl with snow with his own hands. While thus engaged, he was struck with a sudden chill, which brought on a fever, of which, after a week's illness, he died, on Easter-day. He was not unprepared for death: his errors, grievous as they were, had proceeded rather from weakness and timidity than from any deliberate cruelty or dishonesty, and he had throughout his life both expressed and felt a deep reverence for religion. One of his sayings was that, 'A little philosophy makes men apt to forget God, *as attributing too much to second causes;* but depth of philosophy brings man back to God again.' And his Essays, throughout the whole series, show a constant desire to inculcate the practice of virtue, even of those virtues of which his own infirmities made him most forgetful. Of those infirmities, and of their tendency to obscure his fame, he was painfully conscious in his last moments, though not without a hope that something might be forgiven to the great services which he was equally conscious that he had done to the whole world. 'For my name and memory,' he says in his last will, 'I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and to the next age.' And succeeding ages, which think but little of the corrupt judge, and remember only the great philosopher, in ranking him by the side of the blameless Newton, have justified his confidence.

The following essay is not only a fair specimen of his style of composition, but, by the 'antitheta' at the end, shows the way in which he marshalled his arguments in his own mind, before beginning to write.

(Essay 17. On Superstition).

It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely: and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: 'Surely,' saith he, 'I had rather, a great deal, men should say there was no such a man at all as Plutarch than they should say there was one Plutarch, that would eat his children as soon as they were born, as the poet speaks of Saturn: and as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation—all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: therefore atheism did never perturb States; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to atheism, as the time of Augustus Cæsar, were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many States, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile* that ravisheth all the spheres of government. The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools; and arguments are fitted to practise in a reversed order. It was gravely said by some of the prelates in the Council of Trent, where the doctrine of the schoolmen bare great sway, that the schoolmen were like astronomers, which did feign eccentrics and epicycles, and such engines of orbs, to save the phenomena, though they knew there were no such things; and, in like manner, that the schoolmen had framed a number of subtile and intricate axioms and theorems, to save the practice of the Church.

The causes of superstition are pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; over-great reverence of traditions, which cannot but load the Church; the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition and lucre; the favouring too much of good intentions, which openeth the gate to conceits and novelties; the taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imaginations; and, lastly, barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters. Superstition, without a veil, is a deformed thing; for as it addeth deformity to an ape to be so like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed; and as wholesome meat corrupteth to little worms, so good forms and orders corrupt into a number of petty observances. There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if

they go farthest from the superstition formerly received; therefore care should be had that (as it fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.

(Antitheta on Superstition.)

Pro.—Qui zelo peccant, non probandi, sed tamen amandi sunt.

Those who go wrong from excess of zeal, cannot indeed be approved, but must nevertheless be loved.

Contra—Ut simiæ, similitudo cum homine deformitatem addit; ita superstitione, similitudo cum religione.

As an ape is the more hideous for its resemblance to a man, so is superstition for its resemblance to religion.

Præstat nullam habere de diis opinionem, quam contumeliosam.

It is better to have no opinion at all of the gods, than a degrading one.

(Essay 18. Of Travel.)

Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience. He that travelleth into a country, before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school, and not to travel. That young men travel under some tutor, or grave servant, I allow well; so that he be such a one that hath the language, and hath been in the country before, whereby he may be able to tell them what things are worthy to be seen in the country where they go, what acquaintances they are to seek, what exercises or discipline the place yieldeth; for else young men shall go hooded, and look abroad little. It is a strange thing that, in sea-voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sea and sky, men should make diaries; but in land-travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it—as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation: let diaries therefore be brought in use. The things to be seen and observed are the courts of princes, especially when they give audience to ambassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes; and so of consistories ecclesiastic; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities and towns; and so the havens and harbours, antiquities and ruins, libraries, colleges, disputations, and lectures, where any are; shipping and navies, houses and gardens of state and pleasure near great cities; armouries, arsenals, magazines, exchanges, burses, warehouses; exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like; comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do

resort; treasuries of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the places where they go —after all which the tutors, or servants, ought to make diligent enquiry. As for triumphs, masks, feasts, weddings, funerals, capital executions, and such shows, men need not be put in mind of them; yet they are not to be neglected. If you will have a young man to put his travel into a little room, and in short time to gather much, this you must do: first, as was said, he must have some entrance into the language before he goeth; then he must have such a servant, or tutor, as knoweth the country, as was likewise said; let him carry with him also some card, or book, describing the country where he travelleth, which will be a good key to his enquiry; let him keep also a diary; let him not stay long in one city or town, more or less as the place deserveth, but not long; nay, when he stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of the town to another, which is a great adamant of acquaintance; let him sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travelleth; let him, upon his removes from one place to another, procure recommendation to some person of quality residing in the place whither he removeth, that he may use his favour in those things he desireth to see or know; thus he may abridge his travel with much profit.

As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel, that which is most of all profitable is, acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors; for so, in travelling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many. Let him also see and visit eminent persons of all kinds, which are of great name abroad, that he may be able to tell how the life agreeth with the fame. For quarrels, they are, with care and discretion, to be avoided —they are commonly for mistresses, healths, place, and words; and let a man beware how he keepeth company with choleric and quarrelsome persons, for they will engage him into their own quarrels. When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries where he hath travelled altogether behind him, but maintain a correspondence by letters with those of his acquaintance which are of most worth; and let his travel appear rather in his discourse than in his apparel or gesture; and in his discourse let him be rather advised in his answers than forward to tell stories; and let it appear that he doth not change his country manners for those of foreign parts, but only prick in some flowers of that he hath learned abroad into the customs of his own country.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADDISON.

A.D. 1672-1719.

VERY different in the structure of his mind and in the style of his composition from him of whom we have just spoken is he who is generally accounted the most perfect writer of the class, Joseph Addison. His essays, too, have one claim to notice that belongs to no other works of the same kind, that they procured him a place in the government of his country.

He was born in 1672, being the son of a clergyman in Wiltshire, who, when he was about twelve years old, was promoted to be Dean of Lichfield. He was educated at Charter House, and at Oxford, as a member first of Queen's College, and afterwards of Magdalen, where he acquired a considerable reputation for an undergraduate, by the classical tone of his Latin verses. But he had hardly taken his degree when he came before the world at large as an English poet also, addressing Dryden, then universally acknowledged as

> The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme,

and publishing a translation of the greater part of Virgil's fourth Georgic; on which Dryden, won perhaps by the youth's admiration of him, which was evidently sincere, bestowed high commendation; declaring that, after it, 'his latter swarm' (the subject of the Georgic is the care of bees, and second swarms are notoriously valueless), 'was hardly worth hiving:' a verdict in which those who examine it, without having any compliments from the author to be grateful for, will hardly coincide. We may even infer that he himself did not wholly agree with it, or at least did not think his English equal to his Latin verse, since in his next poem he returned to the ancient language. Dryden had made him acquainted with a young man,

William Congreve, who, though only of exactly his own age, had been introduced earlier into the society of the metropolis, and who, at the age of twenty-one, had made himself famous by one of the best comedies that at that time had been produced on the stage. 'The Old Bachelor' had won him the favour of the accomplished Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Montagu, as much devoted to literature as to the weightier cares of finance, who had given him a valuable place, and to the same friendly minister Congreve presented his new friend. Montagu at once showed a willingness to serve him, and Addison wishing to recommend himself to Montagu's master, the king, wrote a poem on the peace of Ryswick, which, as I have already said, he composed in Latin, partly, perhaps, from a knowledge that William, though no great scholar, understood that language better than English. If the treaty had needed a defence, the advocacy which it received from the poem would not have been very effectual; but the verses answered the end which was really aimed at by them, since they procured the author a pension of 300*l.* a year, which, however, is said not to have been very regularly paid. It was given, however, professedly in order to enable him to travel; and accordingly he went abroad, visiting France and Italy, and wrote an account of his travels, in which Johnson, partial as he is to him, can find little to praise. His talent lay in observing men, not countries, and as Johnson confesses, the greater part of his book might have been written at home as easily as abroad.

The new reign did not greatly diminish his prospects of ministerial patronage; Montagu, who had become Lord Halifax, was still zealous to befriend him, and in 1704 the events of the war gave him an opportunity. Everyone who could pen a stanza tried his hand at celebrating the great victory of Blenheim, a triumph especially grateful to a people ashamed of Charles's naval campaigns against the Dutch, and wearied with William's bloody and profitless warfare against Louis. Blenheim seemed at once to recall the glories of Crecy and Agincourt; and Lord Godolphin, doubly interested, as minister and relative, in the fame of the hero who had conquered, lamented to

Halifax the unworthiness of all the panegyrics which had yet been pronounced on it. Halifax undertook to find a poet who should celebrate the achievement in fitting strains, provided the Treasurer would find a fitting reward; and the fruit of the negotiation was Addison's poem of 'The Campaign,' which is of itself quite sufficient to prove that the author was no poet. It is now pretty generally admitted that there are but six tolerable lines in the whole poem.[1] But those six lines gilded all the rest, and the poet's fortunes with it. He at once received a lucrative post, the Commissionership of Appeals; two years afterwards he was made an Under Secretary of State, and obtained a seat in the House of Commons as member for Malmesbury; and, when the Marquis of Wharton was sent to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant, Addison accompanied him as his secretary, thus filling the same post that had formerly been occupied by Spenser. He obtained also a seat in the Irish Parliament, as member for Cavan, and seems indeed by this time to have been regularly enrolled as one of the officials of the great Whig party, on whose fortunes his own were henceforth to depend; though he probably was never a very efficient man of business, and the only peculiarity in his way of transacting the duties of his various offices is one which has been preserved by Johnson, who has recorded that from the beginning he made a rule of never remitting any of his fees out of courtesy to his friends.

But in 1709, while still in Ireland, he was led to try his hand at a new species of composition, which speedily developed a talent in him of which he himself was probably hitherto unconscious, but to which he has ever since

[1] The simile of the angel: no very extraordinary effort of the imagination, in the opinion of Dr. Madden, a critic whose judgment Johnson quotes with unusual deference.

> So, when an angel, by divine command,
> With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
> (Such as of late o'er pale Britannia pass'd)
> Calm and serene he drives the furious blast,
> And, pleased th' Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.'

owed the whole of his reputation as a man of letters. Richard Steele, an old Charter House schoolfellow, after trying more than one expedient for earning money: as an officer of the Life Guards; as author of a solemn, semi-religious treatise, and of one or two plays far from destitute of humour, though not quite entitled to rank in the first class of such works; in 1709 came before the world with a composition of an almost entirely novel kind, a series of periodical essays, the subjects of which were to be something like those of Juvenal's satires,

> Whate'er men hope or fear, or love or hate,
> Do, say, or feel, our volume shall relate.

They were to appear three times a week. Nothing was to be foreign to them. They were to paint the manners of the age, to laugh at the follies, sometimes to scourge the vices, of society; to inculcate principles of virtue; to lay down rules of criticism; occasionally to allure by a lively allegory the attention of impatience or frivolity that would not endure a sermon. To supply every number of such a work was beyond the powers of any single individual. Steele sought the aid of friends, and especially of his old schoolfellow, which was willingly given. And, though his own papers were far from devoid of wit and well-turned phrases, he frankly owned the superiority of Addison. He even feigned a comical kind of distress at the result of the alliance. 'He fared,' he said, 'like a distressed prince, who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid. He was undone by his auxiliary. When he had once obtained his aid, he could not subsist without dependence on him.' The confession was the genuine expression of Steele's honest heart, which he afterwards showed in the most convincing way by giving up to his ally, when the 'Spectator' was substituted for the 'Tatler,' the task of filling up the character of Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he himself had drawn the original sketch, and his own age and every succeeding generation has confirmed his judgment. For, indeed, in keen observation of all the nicer shades and more delicate varieties of human character, Addison has no superior; in quiet, gentlemanlike humour

he has no rival; while some of the allegories and fables which he at times scatters among his contributions display so fertile an invention, so rich and playful a fancy, that they excite our wonder that he did not shine more in poetry when he had so many of the qualities of a poet. It may be added that his pleasantry is invariably good-natured; we look in his pages in vain for sneers or sarcasms; and that, whether his mood be gay or serious, his pen is always exercised in the cause of virtue and religion.

'The Tatler' lasted till January 1711; and, after a rest of a few weeks, as has been already intimated, was replaced by the 'Spectator,' of which Addison became the ostensible chief, as Steele had been in the case of the 'Tatler.' The 'Spectator' was published daily; and, like its predecessor, lasted about two years, during which time it may be said almost to have created a body of readers such as certainly no publication, unconnected with politics, had ever previously attracted. It numbered nearly 4,000 subscribers;[1] of some particular articles 20,000 copies are said to have been sold. And when it stopped, and was republished in volumes, the number of purchasers more than doubled that of the original subscribers. At the end of 1712 the 'Spectator' was stopped, to be in its turn replaced by a third periodical, entitled the 'Guardian,' with which, however, Addison had but little connection, probably because, as Lord Macaulay surmises, he was occupied in finishing 'Cato,' a tragedy on which he had been employed at intervals for many years, and which in the spring of 1713 was produced on the stage. Lord Macaulay, one of Addison's warmest champions, extends the admiration which he lavishes on his 'Tatlers' and 'Spectators' to 'Cato' likewise; allowing indeed its inferiority to the masterpieces of the French stage, to 'Athalie' or 'Saul,' but placing it 'not below "Cinna,"' and above many of the plays of Corneille, Racine, or Voltaire. It is, indeed, only with the dramas of the French school that it can be compared; for it is written wholly on their model. But I confess it

[1] This is Lord Macaulay's statement; but Johnson infers from the produce of the tax that, at all events after the imposition of the stamp duty, the sale did not reach 2,000.

seems to me that it has all the faults of the French tragedies, sometimes even in an exaggerated form, and but little of their occasional fire. 'Cato' and 'Sempronius' resemble Romans as little as the 'Titus' of Racine. Racine's ancient heroes are fine gentlemen of the court of Louis with classical names; and Addison's are members of the Royal Society, or rather, perhaps, Oxford tutors, in the same disguise, if it can be called one; while the unity of place is so strictly preserved that the whole action passes in a single room, the vestibule of Cato's house. But, luckily for the author, its success on the stage did not depend on its merits, but partly on the zeal of his friends, and partly on the peculiar position of the two great political parties at the moment. Pope wrote an admirable prologue for it; Steele undertook the act of packing a house, and exerted his skill with the most hearty energy. The Whigs, in a body, came down to support their brother Whig. The Tories, who affected a general disapproval of standing armies on principle, and a particular dread lest Marlborough might turn against his own country the arms which her enemies had found invincible, professed to see an advocacy of their own sentiments in the animadversions on Cæsar, who had used his legions to subvert the old constitution of Rome. And thus, as Pope describes the scene, 'the numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theatre were echoed back by the Tories on the other; . . . and after all the applause of the opposite parties, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, and presented him with fifty guineas, as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator.' [1]

The friendship, however, between Addison and Pope, which the supply of the prologue seemed to intimate, did not last long. The ostensible cause of quarrel was the conduct of Addison on the subject of the translation of Homer, which has been already mentioned in the sketch of Pope; and which, as Pope believed, proceeded from a jealousy of his abilities and reputation, which the 'Rape of the Lock' had placed almost on a level with that of Dryden.

[1] Letter to Sir W. Trumball.

When the feeling of ill-will was once kindled, other circumstances soon tended to exasperate it. The Earl of Warwick, whose mother was Addison's wife, told Pope that a pamphlet which contained some severe reflections on him had been prompted by Addison. And Pope, in retaliation, wrote that stinging satire on Atticus, which he sent to Addison to peruse, in order, apparently, to deter him from venturing on any repetition of such unfriendly conduct, and which many years afterwards he inserted in one of his satires. The publishing of such an attack on Addison after his death cannot be defended, and the question who was most to blame for the whole quarrel has been revived with some zeal in recent years, when Addison had the advantage which, a generation earlier, was enjoyed by Pope, of having his cause advocated by writers of great power and deserved popularity. But with all their ingenuity, neither Macaulay nor Thackeray can prove that Addison was capable of honest friendship, or do away with the odious fact of his having put an execution into the house of Steele, and sold off all his property to compel payment of a small loan, though he himself was a wealthy man, and his old schoolfellow was never out of difficulties. And on the question of the pamphlet Lord Warwick's authority seems indisputable. It may be added that it clearly was not to Pope's interest to quarrel with Addison, for, under the new Brunswick dynasty, the latter had become a person of great political power. The council which carried on the government till the arrival of the new king, appointed him Secretary to the Board; in 1716 he married a highly-dowered and noble wife, the Countess of Warwick, and in 1717, on the retirement of Lord Townsend and Walpole from office, he became Secretary of State, a promotion which was a remarkable tribute to his literary powers, as he was not only destitute of eloquence, but so timid in the House that he could hardly be induced to attempt to speak. But, besides his articles in the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator,' others of his writings had shown his pen to be as well-suited for political warfare as for moral discussions or humorous descriptions. In Anne's time he had not been afraid to measure himself against Swift in the 'Whig

Examiner,' which even Johnson, who disapproves of its views, admits to be so full of humour that 'every reader of every party must wish for more of it.' And at the beginning of the new reign he supported his party with a new serial, the 'Freeholder,' in which, according to the same most impartial judge, he displayed the same characteristic quality in as great perfection as ever. 'In argument he had many equals; but his humour was matchless.' And such a talent was more profitable to an author than it would be at the present day. For while the publication of the debates in Parliament was prohibited, a lively pamphlet, which could be circulated abroad, was often of greater service to its party than the most eloquent speech, which was known to none but the few members who chanced to hear it.

But Addison was not fated long to enjoy his secretaryship, or his noble wife; the latter indeed being no great addition to his happiness, since she was mean, imperious, and jealous. At the beginning of 1718 he was compelled to resign his office by a severe attack of asthma, according to Macaulay, though Pope affirmed (and Johnson quotes his assertion with evident belief and approval) that he relinquished his post because he found by experience his inability to discharge its duties. He was a victim to his own nicety of taste, as Pope said: 'He could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions.' His colleagues, however, conferred on him a pension of 1,500*l.* a year; and he began to occupy himself in planning fresh literary works, when he was arrested by the disease which, at all events, may have had some share in determining him to retire from official life. He even contemplated an English dictionary, a publication in which his wit and humour would have been thrown away, his elegance of style could have found no room to exert itself, and for which we have no reason to think him possessed of sufficient learning to be at all qualified. But, while revolving such ideas, he was once more called on to exercise his talents as a pamphleteer, and once more descended into the political arena, with great zeal, in defence of the unconstitutional and mischievous Peerage Bill. Steele was the chief writer on the other side, and Addison had the

mortification not only to be beaten by him in argument, but to have some of his antagonist's keenest weapons sharpened by quotations from his own favourite 'Cato.' The controversy was not terminated when Addison died, breathing his last with cheerfulness and pious resignation, in June 1719, when he had but just completed his forty-seventh year.

Johnson, imitating Quintilian's eulogy on Cicero, closes a well-balanced panegyric on his virtues and talents with the assertion that 'whoever wishes to attain an English style familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the study of Addison.' The author of the 'Rambler,' who was not unconscious of the defects of his own style, not unnaturally admired those qualities in which he felt himself to be most deficient. And perhaps some deduction from such high praise will be made by those who think that Addison polished his style to such a degree as to deprive it of all strength. The same panegyrist admits that his argumentative powers were of no high order; and I confess I think that, whenever his tone is serious, his manner is far more valuable than his matter: that his phrases, if smooth, are soft, and wanting in vigour; and that his moral reflections, like his criticisms, show but little depth of thought. But from his wit and humour no deductions can be made. He was certainly endowed with both qualities in as high perfection as any writer in our language; and it is a still greater praise that they were uniformly employed, as Johnson (quoting his friend Tickell) remarks, 'on the side of virtue and religion.' His contemporary, Congreve, seemed to think these faculties incompatible with morality, and even with decency; but Addison 'not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and of truth. He dissipated the prejudice that long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principle. He restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed.' [1]

[1] Lives of the Poets, iii. 156.

Of the following extracts, the first combines with his habitual humour a richness of poetical invention of which he has given us but few specimens. The second is more characteristic of his style, and is one which it is not impossible that the changes of fashion may again render appropriate to the time. It may be remarked, too, that they show a difference in some usages of grammar or expression from the mode which prevails now. Thus Addison writes, 'stands in *a* readiness' and 'in course,' where a modern writer would say 'in readiness' and 'of course.'

(The Spectator, No. 159.)

When I was at Grand Cairo, I picked up several Oriental manuscripts, which I have still by me. Among others I met with one entitled, the 'Visions of Mirza,' which I have read over with great pleasure. I intend to give it to the public when I have no other entertainment for them; and shall begin with the first vision, which I have translated word for word, as follows:—

On the fifth day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation of the vanity of human life; and, passing from one thought to another, 'Surely,' said I, 'man is but a shadow, and life a dream.' Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him, he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different to anything I had ever heard. They put one in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of their last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures.

I had been often told that the rock before me was the haunt of a Genius, and that several had been entertained with music who had passed by it, but never heard that the musician had before made himself visible. When he had raised my thoughts by those transporting airs which he played, to taste the pleasures of his conversation, as I looked upon him like one astonished, he beckoned

to me, and by the waving of his hand directed me to approach the place where he sat. I drew near with that reverence which is due to a superior nature, and as my heart was entirely subdued by the captivating strains I had heard, I fell down at his feet and wept. The Genius smiled upon me with a look of compassion and affability that familiarised him to my imagination, and at once dispelled all the fears and apprehensions with which I approached him. He lifted me from the ground, and, taking me by the hand, 'Mirza,' said he, 'I have heard thee in thy soliloquies; follow me.'

He then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, 'Cast thy eyes eastward,' said he, 'and tell me what thou seest.' 'I see,' said I, 'a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it.' 'The valley that thou seest,' said he, 'is the Vale of Misery, and the tide of water that thou seest, is part of the great tide of Eternity.' 'What is the reason,' said I, 'that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other?' 'What thou seest,' said he, 'is that portion of Eternity which is called Time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now,' said he, 'this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it.' 'I see a bridge,' said I, 'standing in the midst of the tide.' 'The bridge thou seest,' said he, 'is Human Life; consider it attentively.' Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of three score and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which, added to those that were entire, made up the number about a hundred. As I was counting the arches, the Genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches; but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition in which I now beheld it. 'But tell me further,' said he, 'what thou discoverest on it.' 'I see multitudes of people passing over it,' said I, 'and a black cloud hanging on each end of it.' As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed underneath it; and, upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon but they fell through them into the tide, and immediately disappeared. These hidden pitfalls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent with so long a walk.

I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards the heavens in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a speculation stumbled and fell out of sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of baubles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects I observed some with scimitars in their hands, who ran to and fro upon the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped had they not been thus forced upon them.

The Genius, seeing me indulge myself in this melancholy prospect, told me I had dwelt long enough upon it. 'Take thine eyes off the bridge,' said he, 'and tell me if thou yet seest anything thou dost not comprehend.' Upon looking up, 'What mean,' said I, 'those great flights of birds that are perpetually hovering about the bridge, and settling upon it from time to time? I see vultures, harpies, ravens, cormorants, and, among many other feathered creatures, several little winged boys, that perch in great numbers upon the middle arches.' 'These,' said the Genius, 'are envy, avarice, superstition, despair, love, with the like cares and passions that infest human life.'

I here fetched a deep sigh. 'Alas!' said I, 'man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!' The Genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. 'Look no more,' said he, 'on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it.' I directed my sight as I was ordered, and whether or no the good Genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate, I saw the valley opening at the further end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested

on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it; but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of fountains, or resting on beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the Genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. 'The islands,' said he, 'that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching further than thy eye, or even thine imagination, can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who, according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among those several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them; every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirza, habitations worth contending for? Does life appear miserable that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward? Is death to be feared that will convey thee to so happy an existence? Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him.' I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. 'At length,' said I, 'show me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant. The Genius making no answer, I turned about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me: I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating; but, instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.

(The Spectator, No. 102).

'Mr. Spectator,—Women are armed with fans, as men with swords, and sometimes do more execution with them. To the end

therefore that ladies may be entire mistresses of the weapon which they bear, I have erected an academy for the training up of young women in the exercise of the fan, according to the most fashionable airs and motions that are now practised at Court. The ladies who carry fans under me are drawn up twice a day in my great hall, where they are instructed in the use of their arms, and exercised by the following words of command. Handle your fans, Unfurl your fans, Discharge your fans, Ground your fans, Recover your fans, Flutter your fans. By the right observation of these few plain words of command, a woman of a tolerable genius, who will apply herself diligently to her exercise for the space of but one half-year, shall be able to give her fan all the graces that can possibly enter into that little modish machine.

But to the end that my readers may form to themselves a right notion of this exercise, I beg leave to explain it to them in all its parts. When my female regiment is drawn up in array, with every one her weapon in her hand, upon my giving the word to Handle their fans, each of them shakes her fan at me with a smile, then gives her righthand woman a tap upon the shoulder, then presses her lips with the extremity of her fan, then lets her arms fall in an easy motion, and stands in a readiness to receive the next word of command. All this is done with a close fan, and is generally learned in the first week.

The next motion is that of Unfurling the fan, in which are comprehended several little flirts and vibrations, as also gradual and deliberate openings, with many voluntary fallings asunder in the fan itself, that are seldom learned under a month's practice. This part of the exercises pleases the spectators more than any other, as it discovers on a sudden an infinite number of cupids, garlands, altars, birds, beasts, rainbows, and the like agreeable figures, that display themselves to view, whilst everyone in the regiment holds a picture in her hand.

Upon my giving the word to Discharge their fans, they give one general crack that may be heard at a considerable distance when the wind sits fair. This is one of the most difficult parts of the exercise; but I have several ladies with me, who at their first entrance could not give a pop loud enough to be heard at the further end of a room, who can now discharge a fan in such a manner that it shall make a report like a pocket-pistol. I have likewise taken care, in order to hinder young women from letting off their fans in wrong places or unsuitable occasions, to show upon what subject the crack of a fan may come in properly: I have likewise invented a fan, with which a girl of sixteen, by the help of a little wind which is inclosed about one of the largest

sticks, can make as loud a crack as a woman of fifty with an ordinary fan.

When the fans are thus discharged, the word of command in course is to Ground their fans. This teaches a lady to quit her fan gracefully when she throws it aside, in order to take up a pack of cards, adjust a curl of hair, replace a falling pin, or apply herself to any other matter of importance. This part of the exercise, as it only consists in tossing a fan with an air upon a long table, which stands by for that purpose, may be learned in two days' time as well as in a twelvemonth.

When my female regiment is thus disarmed, I generally let them walk about the room for some time; when on a sudden, like ladies that look upon their watches after a long visit, they all of them hasten to their arms, catch them up in a hurry, and place themselves in their proper stations upon my calling out, Recover your fans. This part of the exercise is not difficult, provided a woman applies her thoughts to it.

The fluttering of the fan is the last, and indeed the masterpiece of the whole exercise; but if a lady does not misspend her time, she may make herself mistress of it in three months. I generally lay aside the dog-days and the hot time of the summer for the teaching this part of the exercise; for as soon as ever I pronounce, Flutter your fans, the place is filled with so many zephyrs and gentle breezes as are very refreshing in that season of the year, though they might be dangerous to ladies of a tender constitution in any other.

There is an infinite variety of motions to be made use of in the flutter of a fan. There is the angry flutter, the modest flutter, the timorous flutter, the confused flutter, and the amorous flutter. Not to be tedious, there is scarce any emotion in the mind which does not produce a suitable agitation in the fan; insomuch that if I only see the fan of a disciplined lady, I know very well whether she laughs, frowns, or blushes. I have seen a fan so very angry that it would have been dangerous for the absent lover who provoked it to have come within the wind of it; and at other times so very languishing, that I have been glad, for the lady's sake, the lover was at a sufficient distance from it. I need not add, that a fan is either a prude or coquette, according to the nature of the person who bears it. To conclude my letter, I must acquaint you that I have from my own observations compiled a little treatise for the use of my scholars, entitled, 'The Passions of the Fan,' which I will communicate to you, if you think it may be of use to the public.—I am, &c.

CHAPTER XX.

GOLDSMITH.

A.D. 1728–1774.

Of Goldsmith we have already spoken, both as a dramatist and as a poet. He is almost equally admirable as an essayist. He does not indeed quite equal Addison in sly delicacy of humour; but in grasp of mind and sagacity he is more than his equal; and it may be questioned whether, while equal to Addison in the correctness and polish of his style, he does not surpass him in animation and vigour. It has been mentioned, in our biographical sketch of him, how many passages in his works prove him to have been in advance of his age. And his enlightened humanity appears to great advantage in the following extract from No. 80 of his 'Chinese Letters.'

(On the evil tendency of increasing penal laws, or enforcing even those already in being with rigour.)

I have always regarded the spirit of mercy which appears in the Chinese laws with admiration. An order for the execution of a criminal is carried from Court by slow journeys of six miles a day, but a pardon is sent down with the most rapid dispatch. If five sons of the same father be guilty of the same offence, one of them is forgiven, in order to continue the family, and comfort his aged parents in their decline.

Similar to this, there is a spirit of mercy breathes through the laws of England, which some erroneously endeavour to suppress; the laws, however, seem unwilling to punish the offender, or to furnish the officers of justice with every means of acting with severity. Those who arrest debtors are denied the use of arms; the nightly watch is permitted to repress the disorders of the drunken citizens only with clubs; justice, in such a case, seems to hide her terrors, and permits some offenders to escape rather than load any with a punishment disproportioned to the crime.

Thus it is the glory of an Englishman that he is not only governed by laws, but that these are also tempered by mercy. A country restrained by severe laws, and those too executed with severity (as in Japan), is under the most terrible species of tyranny: a royal tyrant is generally dreadful to the great, but numerous penal laws grind every rank of people, and chiefly those least able to resist oppression—the poor.

It is very possible thus for a people to become slaves to laws of their own enacting, as the Athenians were to those of Draco. 'It might first happen,' says the historian, 'that men with peculiar talents for villany attempted to evade the ordinances already established; their practices, therefore, soon brought on a new law, levelled against them; but the same degree of cunning which had taught the knave to evade the former statutes, taught him to evade the latter also; he flew to new shifts, while justice pursued with new ordinances; still, however, he kept his proper distance, and whenever one crime was judged penal by the state, he left committing it, in order to practise some unforbidden species of villany. Thus the criminal against whom the threatenings were denounced always escaped free; while the simple rogue alone felt the rigour of justice. In the meantime, penal laws became numerous; almost every person in the state, unknowingly, at different times offended, and was every moment subject to a malicious prosecution.' In fact, penal laws, instead of preventing crimes, are generally enacted after the commission; instead of repressing the growth of ingenious villany, only multiply deceit, by putting it upon new shifts and expedients of practising it with impunity.

Such laws, therefore, resemble the guards which are sometimes imposed upon tributary princes, apparently indeed to secure them from danger, but in reality to confirm their captivity.

Penal laws, it must be allowed, secure property in a State, but they also diminish personal security in the same proportion: there is no positive law, how equitable soever, that may not be sometimes capable of injustice. When a law, enacted to make theft punishable with death, happens to be equitably executed, it can at best only guard our possessions; but when, by favour or ignorance, justice pronounces a wrong verdict, it then attacks our lives, since, in such a case, the whole community suffers with the innocent victim: if, therefore, in order to secure the effects of one man, I should make a law which may take away the life of another, in such a case, to attain smaller good, I am guilty of a greater evil; to secure society in the possession of a bauble, I render a real and valuable possession precarious. And indeed the experience of every age may serve to vindicate the assertion: no law could be

more just than that called lesne majestatis, when Rome was governed by emperors. It was but reasonable that every conspiracy against the administration should be detected and punished; yet what terrible slaughters succeeded in consequence of its enactment! proscriptions, stranglings, poisonings, in almost every family of distinction: yet all done in a legal way, every criminal had his trial, and lost his life by a majority of witnesses.

And such will ever be the case where punishments are numerous, and where a weak, vicious, but above all, where a mercenary magistrate is concerned in their execution: such a man desires to see penal laws increased, since he too frequently has it in his power to turn them into instruments of extortion; in such hands, the more laws the wider means, not of satisfying justice, but of satiating avarice.

A mercenary magistrate, who is rewarded in proportion, not to his integrity, but to the number he convicts, must be a person of the most unblemished character, or he will lean on the side of cruelty; and when once the work of injustice is begun, it is impossible to tell how far it will proceed. It is said of the hyæna that, naturally, it is no way ravenous, but when once it has tasted human flesh, it becomes the most voracious animal of the forest, and continues to persecute mankind ever after. A corrupt magistrate may be considered as a human hyæna: he begins, perhaps, by a private snap, he goes on to a morsel among friends, he proceeds to a meal in public, from a meal he advances to a surfeit, and at last sucks blood like a vampyre.

Not into such hands should the administration of justice be entrusted, but to those who know how to reward, as well as to punish. It was a fine saying of Nangfu, the emperor, who, being told that his enemies had raised an insurrection in one of the distant provinces, 'Come then, my friend,' said he, 'follow me, and I promise you that we shall quickly destroy them.' He marched forward, and the rebels submitted upon his approach. All now thought that he would take the most signal revenge, but were surprised to see the captives treated with mildness and humanity. 'How,' cries his first minister, 'is this the manner in which you fulfil your promise? your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed, and behold you have pardoned all, and even caressed some!' 'I promised,' replied the emperor, with a generous air, 'to destroy my enemies; I have fulfilled my word, for see, they are enemies no longer—I have made friends of them.'

This, could it always succeed, were the true method of destroying the enemies of a State. Well it were if rewards and mercy alone could regulate the commonwealth; but since punishments are

sometimes necessary, let them at least be rendered terrible by being executed but seldom, and let justice lift her sword rather to terrify than revenge.

Letter 51 is probably derived, like other passages both in his plays and his poems, from his own experience.

(A Bookseller's Visit to the Chinese.)

As I was yesterday seated at breakfast over a pensive dish of tea, my meditations were interrupted by my old friend and companion, who introduced a stranger, dressed pretty much like himself. The gentleman made several apologies for his visit, begged of me to impute his intrusion to the sincerity of his respect, and the warmth of his curiosity.

As I am very suspicious of my company when I find them very civil without any apparent reason, I answered the stranger's caresses at first with reserve; which my friend perceiving, instantly let me into my visitor's trade and character, asking Mr. Fudge whether he had lately published anything new? I now conjectured that my guest was no other than a bookseller, and his answer confirmed my suspicions.

'Excuse me, sir,' says he, 'it is not the season; books have their time as well as cucumbers. I would no more bring out a new work in summer than I would sell pork in the dog-days. Nothing in my way goes off in summer, except very light goods indeed. A review, a magazine, or a sessions paper may amuse a summer reader; but all our stock of value we reserve for a spring and winter trade.' 'I must confess, sir,' says I, 'a curiosity to know what you call a valuable stock, which can only bear a winter perusal.' 'Sir,' replied the bookseller, 'it is not my way to cry up my own goods; but, without exaggeration, I will venture to show with any of the trade: my books at least have the peculiar advantage of being always new; and it is my way to clear off my old to the trunk-makers every season. I have ten new title-pages about me, which only want books to be added to make them the finest things in nature. Others may pretend to direct the vulgar but that is not my way; I always let the vulgar direct me; wherever popular clamour arises, I always echo the million. For instance, should the people in general say that such a man is a rogue, I instantly give orders to set him down in print a villain; thus every man buys the book, not to learn new sentiments, but to have the pleasure of seeing his own reflected.' 'But, sir,' interrupted I, 'you speak as if you yourself wrote the books you

publish. May I be so bold as to ask a sight of some of those intended publications which are shortly to surprise the world?' 'As to that, sir,' replied the talkative bookseller, 'I only draw out the plans myself, and though I am very cautious of communicating them to any, yet, as in the end I have a favour to ask, you shall see a few of them. Here, sir, here they are, diamonds of the first water, I assure you. Imprimis: 'A Translation of several Medical Precepts for the use of such Physicians as do not understand Latin.' Item: 'The Young Clergyman's Art of Placing Patches regularly, with a Dissertation on the different manners of Smiling without Distorting the Face.' Item: 'The Whole Art of Love made perfectly easy;' by a broker of 'Change Alley. Item: 'The Proper Manner of cutting Black-Lead Pencils, and making Crayons;' by the Right Hon. the Earl of . . . . Item: 'The Muster-Master-General, or the Review of Reviews'—— 'Sir,' cried I, interrupting him, 'my curiosity with regard to title-pages is satisfied; I should be glad to see some longer manuscript, a history or an epic poem.' 'Bless me,' cries the man of industry, 'now you speak of an epic poem, you shall see an excellent farce. Here it is; dip into it where you will, it will be found replete with true modern humour. Strokes, sir! it is filled with strokes of wit and satire in every line.' 'Do you call these dashes of the pen strokes,' replied I, 'for I confess I see no other?' 'And pray, sir,' returned he, 'what do you call them? Do you see anything good now-a-days that is not filled with strokes—and dashes? Sir, a well-placed dash makes half the wit of our writers of modern humour. I bought last season a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha! ha!'s, three good things, and a garter. And yet it played off, and bounced and cracked, and made more sport than a firework.' 'I fancy then, sir, you were a considerable gainer?' 'It must be owned the piece did pay; but, upon the whole, I cannot much boast of last winter's success: I gained by two murders, but then I lost by an ill-timed charity sermon. I was a considerable sufferer by my 'Direct Road to an Estate,' but the 'Infernal Guide' brought me up again. Ah, sir, that was a piece touched off by the hand of a master, filled with good things from one end to the other. The author had nothing but the jest in view; no dull moral lurking beneath, nor ill-natured satire to sour the reader's good humour; he wisely considered that moral and humour at the same time were quite overdoing the business.' 'To what purpose was the book, then, published?' cried I. 'Sir, the book was published in order to be sold, and no book sold better, except the criticisms upon it, which came out soon after; of all kinds of writing, that

goes off best at present, and I generally fasten a criticism upon every selling book that is published.

'I once had an author who never left the least opening for the critics: close was the word, always very right, and very dull, ever on the safe side of an argument; yet with all his qualifications, incapable of coming into favour. I soon perceived that his bent was for criticism, and as he was good for nothing else, supplied him with pens and paper, and planted him at the beginning of every month as a censor on the works of others. In short I found him a treasure; no merit could escape him: but what is most remarkable of all, he ever wrote best and bitterest when drunk.' 'But are there not some works,' interrupted I, 'that from the very manner of their composition must be exempt from criticism, particularly such as profess to disregard its laws?' 'There is no work whatsoever but he can criticise,' replied the bookseller, 'even though you wrote in Chinese he would have a pluck at you. Suppose you should take it into your head to publish a book, let it be a volume of Chinese letters, for instance, write how you will, he shall show the world you could have written better. Should you, with the most local exactness, stick to the manners and customs of the country from whence you come, should you confine yourself to the narrow limits of Eastern knowledge, and be perfectly simple, and perfectly natural, he has then the strongest reason to exclaim. He may with a sneer send you back to China for readers. He may observe that, after the first or second letter the iteration of the same simplicity is insupportably tedious; but the worst of all is, the public in such a case will anticipate his censures, and leave you with all your instructive simplicity to be mauled at discretion.

'Yes,' cried I, 'but in order to avoid his indignation, and what I should fear more, that of the public, I would, in such a case, write with all the knowledge I was master of. As I am not possessed of much learning, at least I would not suppress what little I had, nor would I appear more stupid than nature made me.' 'Here then,' cries the bookseller, 'we should have you entirely in our power; unnatural, uneastern, quite out of character, erroneously sensible, would be the whole cry; sir, we should then hunt you down like a rat.' 'Head of my father!' said I, 'sure there are but two ways; the door must either be shut or it must be open. I must either be natural or unnatural.' 'Be what you will, we shall criticise you,' returned the bookseller, 'and prove you a dunce in spite of your teeth. But, sir, it is time that I should come to business. I have just now in the press a history of China; and if you will but put your name to it as the author,

I shall repay the obligation with gratitude.' 'What, sir,' replied I, 'put my name to a work which I have not written! Never, while I retain a proper respect for the public and myself.' The bluntness of my reply quite abated the ardour of the bookseller's conversation, and, after about half an hour's disagreeable reserve, he, with some ceremony, took his leave and withdrew.

Our last extract shows the playful way in which he could narrate a simple incident; and the sagacious humanity with which he could derive lessons from the most ordinary occurrences.

(On the Distresses of the Poor.—Letter 119.)

The misfortunes of the great, my friend, are held up to engage our attention, are enlarged upon in terms of declamation, and the world is called upon to gaze at the noble sufferers: they have at once the comfort of admiration and pity.

Yet, where is the magnanimity of bearing misfortunes when the whole world is looking on? Men in such circumstances can act bravely, even from motives of vanity. He only who, in the vale of obscurity, can brave adversity, who, without friends to encourage, acquaintances to pity, or even without hope to alleviate his distresses, can behave with tranquillity and indifference, is truly great: whether peasant or courtier, he deserves admiration, and should be held up for our imitation and respect.

The miseries of the poor are, however, entirely disregarded; though some undergo more real hardships in one day than the great in their whole lives. It is indeed inconceivable what difficulties the meanest English sailor or soldier endures, without murmuring or regret. Every day is to him a day of misery, and yet he bears his hard fate without repining.

With what indignation do I hear the heroes of tragedy complain of misfortunes and hardships, whose greatest calamity is founded in arrogance and pride! Their severest distresses are pleasures compared to what many of the adventuring poor every day sustain without murmuring. These may eat, drink, and sleep; have slaves to attend them, and are sure of subsistence for life; while many of their fellow-creatures are obliged to wander, without a friend to comfort or to assist them, find enmity in every law, and are too poor even to obtain justice.

I have been led into these reflections from accidentally meeting, some days ago, a poor fellow begging at one of the outlets of this town, with a wooden leg. I was curious to learn what had reduced him to his present situation, and, after giving him what I thought proper, desired to know the history of his life and misfor-

tunes, and the manner in which he was reduced to his present distress. The disabled soldier, for such he was, with an intrepidity truly British, leaning on his crutch, put himself into an attitude to comply with my request, and gave me his history as follows:—

'As for misfortunes, sir, I cannot pretend to have gone through more than others. Except the loss of a limb, and my being obliged to beg, I don't know any reason, thank Heaven, that I have to complain; there are some who have lost both legs and an eye, but, thank Heaven, it is not quite so bad with me.

'My father was a labourer in the country, and died when I was five years old, so I was put upon the parish. As he had been a wandering sort of man, the parishioners were not able to tell to what parish I belonged, or where I was born; so they sent me to another parish, and that parish sent me to a third; till at last it was thought that I belonged to no parish at all. At length, however, they fixed me. I had some disposition to be a scholar, and had actually learned my letters, but the master of the workhouse put me to business as soon as I was able to handle a mallet.

'Here I lived an easy kind of a life for five years. I only wrought ten hours in the day, and had my meat and drink provided for my labour. It is true, I was not suffered to stir far from the house, for fear I should run away, but what of that? I had the liberty of the whole house, and the yard before the door, and that was enough for me.

'I was next bound out to a farmer, where I was up both early and late, but I ate and drank well, and liked my business well enough, till he died. Being then obliged to provide for myself, I was resolved to go and seek my fortune. Thus I lived, and went from town to town, working when I could get employment, and starving when I could get none, and might have lived so still; but happening one day to go through a field belonging to a magistrate, I spied a hare crossing the path just before me. I believe the devil put it in my head to fling my stick at it: well! what will you have on't? I killed the hare, and was bringing it away in triumph, when the justice himself met me; he called me a villain, and, collaring me, desired I would give an account of myself. I began immediately to give a full account of all that I knew of my breed, seed, and generation; but, though I gave a very long account, the justice said I could give no account of myself, so I was indicted, and found guilty of being poor, and sent to Newgate, in order to be transported to the plantations.

'People may say this and that of being in gaol, but for my part I found Newgate as agreeable a place as ever I was in, in all my life. I had my belly full to eat and drink, and did no work, but alas!

this kind of life was too good to last for ever: I was taken out of prison, after five months, put on board of a ship, and sent off with two hundred more. Our passage was but indifferent, for we were all confined in the hold, and died very fast, for want of sweet air and provisions; but, for my part, I did not want meat, because I had a fever all the way. Providence was kind: when provisions grew short, it took away my desire of eating. When we came ashore, we were sold to the planters. I was bound for seven years, and as I was no scholar, for I had forgot my letters, I was obliged to work among the negroes; and served out my time as in duty bound to do.

'When my time was expired, I worked my passage home, and glad I was to see Old England again, because I loved my country. O liberty! liberty! liberty! that is the property of every Englishman, and I will die in its defence. I was afraid, however, that I should be indicted for a vagabond once more, so I did not much care to go into the country, but kept about town, and did little jobs when I could get them. I was very happy in this manner for some time, till one evening, coming home from work, two men knocked me down, and then desired me to stand still. They belonged to a press-gang: I was carried before the justice, and as I could give no account of myself (that was the thing that always hobbled me), I had my choice left, whether to go on board a man-of-war or 'list for a soldier. I chose to be a soldier; and in this post of a gentleman, I served two campaigns in Flanders, was at the battles of Val and Fontenoy, and received but one wound through the breast, which is troublesome to this day.

'When the peace came on I was discharged, and as I could not work, because my wound was sometimes painful, I 'listed for a land man in the East India Company's service. I here fought the French in six pitched battles; and verily believe that, if I could read or write, our captain would have given me promotion, and made me a corporal. But that was not my good fortune; I soon fell sick, and when I became good for nothing, got leave to return home again, with forty pounds in my pocket, which I saved in the service. This was at the beginning of the present war, so I hoped to be set on shore, and to have the pleasure of spending my money; but the Government wanted me, and I was pressed again, before ever I could set foot on shore.

'The boatswain found me, as he said, an obstinate fellow; he swore that I understood my business perfectly well, but that I shammed Abraham merely to be idle. God knows, I knew nothing of sea business: he beat me without considering what he was about. But still my forty pounds was some comfort to me

under every beating: the money was my comfort, and the money I might have had to this day, but that our ship was taken by the French, and so I lost it all.

'Our crew was carried into a French prison, and many of them died, because they were not used to live in a gaol; but for my part it was nothing to me, for I was seasoned. One night, however, as I was sleeping on a bed of boards, with a warm blanket about me (for I always loved to lie well), I was awakened by the boatswain, who had a dark lantern in his hand. 'Jack,' says he to me, 'will you knock out the French sentry's brains?' 'I don't care,' says I, striving to keep myself awake, 'if I lend a hand.' 'Then follow me,' says he, 'and I hope we shall do business.' So up I got, and tied my blanket, which was all the clothes I had, about my middle, and went with him to fight the Frenchmen. We had no arms; but one Englishman is able to beat five French at any time; so we went down to the door, where both the sentries were posted, and rushing upon them seized their arms in a moment, and knocked them down. From thence nine of us ran together to the quay, and seizing the first boat we met, got out of the harbour and put to sea. We had not been here three days before we were taken up by an English privateer, who was glad of so many good hands, and we consented to run our chance. However we had not so much luck as we expected. In three days we fell in with a French man-of-war of forty guns, while we had but twenty-three, so to it we went. The fight lasted for three hours, and I verily believe that we should have taken the Frenchman, but, unfortunately, we lost almost all our men, just as we were going to get the victory. I was once more in the power of the French, and I believe it would have gone hard with me, had I been brought back to my old gaol in Brest, but by good fortune we were retaken and carried to England once more.

'I had almost forgot to tell you that in this last engagement I was wounded in two places: I lost four fingers of the left hand, and my leg was shot off. Had I had the good fortune to have lost my leg and use of my hand on board a king's ship, and not a privateer, I should have been entitled to clothing and maintenance during the rest of my life, but that was not my chance; one man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and another with a wooden ladle. However, blessed be God! I enjoy good health and have no enemy in this world, that I know of, but the French, and the justice of the peace.'

Thus saying, he limped off, leaving my friend and me in admiration of his intrepidity and content: nor could we avoid acknowledging that an habitual acquaintance with misery is the truest school of fortitude and philosophy.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOHNSON.

A.D. 1709—1784.

THE writer of whom I am about to speak is very deserving of our attention, not only on account of the variety of his works, and the excellence of some of them, but likewise for the example which he affords, as striking as any to be found in all our literary history, of a man without any of the higher gifts of genius, wholly destitute of imagination or fancy, or even of a very correct taste in composition, nevertheless, by unwearied industry, steadiness, and honesty of purpose, raising himself to an eminence in the literary world to which at least one of these qualities would generally be reckoned indispensable. Nor was he indebted for his rise to the adventitious aids of birth or manners; his family, though respectable, was humble; his manners, to say the least, uncourtly and repellent.

Samuel Johnson was the son of a bookseller in the cathedral city of Lichfield: his father was himself a man of fair education; and his trade was not ill-calculated to engender a taste for learning in his child, which other circumstances contributed to foster, since from his infancy Samuel was afflicted with the scrofula, which attacked his eyes with particular virulence, rendering him almost blind, and consequently disqualifying him for the ordinary amusements of boyhood. Having received what in those days was accounted a fair education, he was sent to Pembroke College, Oxford, where it is understood that a friend or neighbour, who had conceived a high opinion of his abilities, had proposed to his father to defray his expenses; but, apparently, the gentleman failed to fulfil his promise; his father too fell into difficulties; and he was thus forced,

by want of means, to quit the University before he could take a degree. He had acquired a considerable knowledge of Latin, and a moderate acquaintance with Greek; and this amount of scholarship procured him an ushership at a school in Leicestershire, and a little employment from booksellers; but neither resource lasted long or was very productive: he was in great poverty; and a year or two afterwards, when he was not yet five-and-twenty, he took a step not very well adapted to improve his circumstances: he fell desperately in love with the widow of a bankrupt linen-draper, who was more than twenty years older than himself, and who, if she had ever had any beauty, had certainly outlived it; and in July 1734 he married her, and, to support her, opened a private school in the neighbourhood of Lichfield. But he never got above three pupils; and the skill by which the one of those who afterwards became famous earned his renown he did not learn of his tutor. In fact no man who knew enough to teach, not even his friend Goldsmith, was so little suited as Johnson to be an instructor of youth. His disease had rendered him purblind; he was of a most ungainly figure, addicted to awkward and peculiar habits; violent in his manner; neither able nor disposed to adapt his conversation or explanations to the capacity of the ignorant or the young; and moreover of a desultory turn of mind, and indolent habits, wholly inconsistent with the regularity expected from a schoolmaster. In the end the three pupils became reduced to one, David Garrick; and with him, in 1737, Johnson removed to London, in the hope of maintaining himself by his pen, which to a certain extent he from the first succeeded in doing. He became a contributor to the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' the parent of all the monthly publications which have since appeared, and which still keeps its place among them, with a fair reputation; writing articles of all sorts, brief poems, translations, essays, and, after a time, obtaining regular employment, as a reporter for it of the debates in Parliament. As yet the standing orders of both Houses forbad any report of their proceedings being published openly; indeed in the very same year that Johnson came to London, the Commons discussed the propriety of relaxing their rule,

when it was found that both Walpole, the minister, and Pulteney, the leader of the Opposition, though for different reasons, were equally opposed to any relaxation. Johnson therefore, though Cave, the publisher of the magazine, easily procured him admission to the House of Commons, could not venture to take notes of what he heard, but was forced to trust to an unusually retentive memory, which, at a time when a debate very rarely lasted more than three or four hours, was not often too severely taxed in carrying away all that was worth recording. Still less could Cave dare to announce his reports as what they really were: they were published as the transactions of the Senate of Lilliput, the names of the speakers being disguised under anagrams, or other symbols easily understood by the initiated, but not so undeniably plain as to bring the reporter or publisher within the grasp of a Speaker's warrant.

Work of this sort, however, though it earned him bread, did not procure him fame: no one cared to learn the name of the writer of a few verses in the poet's corner of a magazine, and still less of a reporter; but in 1738 he put forth a poem which, though he published it anonymously, made all those who took an interest in literature eager to learn what was to be learnt of the author. It was not an original poem, but an imitation of the 3rd Satire of Juvenal, which he entitled 'London,' and in which he transferred the Roman satirist's denunciation of the vices of the city of the Cæsars to those which he himself had observed to taint the metropolis of his own country. Juvenal traced the evils of which he complained to Greece: to Johnson the new vices of England and her capital seemed to have been imported from France; and his invectives against them were conceived in the same spirit, and expressed with the same fire, which animated his classical model. 'London' came out on the very same morning on which Pope published his imitations of Horace; but, though the two were thus placed to some extent in the position of rivals, the elder poet, whose fame was established, had the candour to appreciate and the generosity to acknowledge the great merit of his anonymous competitor. He prophesied that such a man could not long be unknown; and when he had discovered

his name, and his objects in life, he made generous exertions to serve him, by interesting men of influence in his behalf, that he might not be starved to death in translating for booksellers; but his want of a University degree prevented him from getting the appointment of Head Master in an endowed school, of which he was desirous; and many years were to elapse before he could feel himself free from dependence for his daily bread on his engagements with publishers, who however, as has certainly been the general practice of that which is called, *par excellence*, *the* trade with authors of merit, treated him with great fairness and liberality, though there were more occasions than one in which he found himself reduced to great difficulties. A second imitation, that of the 10th Satire, to which he gave the name of 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' greatly increased his reputation: the maxims which Juvenal had illustrated by examples drawn from the annals of his own country and of Greece, Johnson illustrated by instances culled from the history of modern Europe, selecting them with singular felicity: Wolsey was his Sejanus; Charles XII. was his Hannibal: while the poetical vigour of his portraits was greatly superior to that of Juvenal, who had not indeed made excellence of that kind his especial aim. But, still, short poems, and those not original, could not be very profitable; and though, before 1749, when he published this latter poem, he had been for some time employed on a work of far greater magnitude and importance, a Dictionary of the English language, for which it was agreed beforehand that he was to receive a very large sum, above 1500*l.*, that failed materially to relieve his necessities, since it occupied him many more years than he contemplated when he first undertook the work. He had calculated on completing it in three years; but it was not till 1755, eight years after he had concluded the agreement, that it was published; and it not only realised all the expectations that had been formed of it, but must be admitted to be by far the most complete work of the kind that as yet had ever been executed in any language. That it had defects, if measured by the present standard, is undeniable: in its etymologies especially it was often incorrect; but its defects were such

as could gradually be supplied, its errors such as could be easily corrected; and when it is remembered that it was the work of a single man, relying almost solely on his own knowledge and diligence, and having no predecessor to whose work he could turn for guidance or aid, it is certainly one of the most astonishing specimens of literary industry on record. Succeeding compilers of similar works are but followers in his steps, working on his plan, and to a great extent availing themselves of his labours. One incident connected with the publication of the work is worth mentioning, as an illustration of the customs prevalent at the time, and to a certain extent of Johnson's independence of character; though I fear we must own that, while it certainly shows him to have been above the meanness of courting men of rank merely as such, it in an equal degree proves him to have been ready to take offence where none was intended, and to offer insults without provocation. The celebrated Lord Chesterfield, who was not merely a man of pleasure and fashion, but of the very first eminence in the political world; who had filled more than one office in the Home Government with great credit, and had certainly been the ablest Lord Lieutenant of Ireland that that country had enjoyed since the death of Strafford; who was also, which is more to our present purpose, not ill-versed in science, and was possessed of a taste in literature that was sound and pure, even if it was a little over-refined, had shown an inclination, the moment the idea was broached, to patronise the Dictionary; and the belief that a noble patron was indispensable to literary success had not yet died out. Dodsley, the publisher, who had the largest share in the work, knew the value of a patron of the rank, reputation, and liberality of Chesterfield, and at his instigation the plan or prospectus of the Dictionary was inscribed to him; but, though Lord Chesterfield, who had already given his opinion on one or two points of detail in the execution of the work, willingly permitted the inscription, and, as far as can be judged from a hint in a note of Boswell's, sent the author a present of 10*l.* as a sort of payment for it, Johnson was disappointed at receiving no further 'act of assistance, word

of encouragement, or smile of favour,'[1] during the progress of the work. It is not very clear what form of favour, encouragement, or assistance he expected; it seems to me that at the critical moment, when the Dictionary was on the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield voluntarily came forward with the most judicious and timely assistance, by writing in the 'World,' a periodical of established reputation, two papers highly eulogistic of Johnson's talents and warmly recommendatory of the work, as one of great necessity, and which 'there was good reason to believe the author would bring as near to perfection as any man could do.' But Johnson was far from looking on this panegyric in the same light. He declared that he had been neglected by Lord Chesterfield, and wrote him a letter which Boswell of course pronounced manly and spirited, but which, I confess, appears to me uncalled for, not to say ungrateful: he speaks of Lord Chesterfield's conduct in thus recommending his work to the literary world (and to others also, for in one of the offending papers it is taken for granted that everyone who can afford it will buy it), as the act of 'one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached the ground, encumbers him with help.' He declares that 'the notice which Lord Chesterfield had taken of his labours had been delayed till he was known and did not want it,' and that he would not 'confess obligations where no benefit had been received.' He even altered a line in his imitation of Juvenal to stereotype his complaint, changing the word 'garret' into 'patron' in his enumeration of the ills to which poor authors are exposed; and, as long as Lord Chesterfield lived, took every opportunity of sneering at and ridiculing him; though Lord Chesterfield, too generous to take offence at his letter, continued to speak of him as a man of great abilities, and to praise his work. One can easily excuse a man conscious of great powers and great industry, and at the same time kept in constant anxiety by want of means, for being irritable and unreasonable; but I confess I cannot see what more Johnson could expect Lord Chesterfield (who was now an elderly man, and so weak in health that

[1] Letter to Lord Chesterfield, Boswell's Life, ii. 236.

he had been obliged to resign his post in the Ministry) to do for him than he did do.

The Dictionary, however, was not allowed to occupy the whole of his time. His necessities compelled him to devise readier means of supplying them than could be furnished by a work which would require years to complete; and with this view he, in 1750, began a periodical in imitation of Addison's 'Spectator,' which he called the 'Rambler,' which he continued for two years, and which is a striking example of his industry and facility of composition, since, though two numbers were published every week, they are nearly all his own unassisted composition. It was not, however, very successful, as, though full of matter, often of valuable instruction, and not seldom enlivened by wit and humour, it wanted that lightness of style which is indispensable to works of this kind. It, however, helped to maintain him, and by so doing increased his reliance on his own powers: a very needful feeling for a man who still had, it may almost be said, to depend as much as any ordinary artisan on his daily labour for his daily pay for the Dictionary itself, as I have mentioned, left him as poor as it found him; and for some years after its publication he was still forced to rely on his pen for the supply of all his necessities; while the rapidity of composition which he had displayed in the 'Rambler' was still more strikingly exemplified by the history of his one work of prose fiction, 'Rasselas,' which, in 1759, he wrote in a single week, to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral and to discharge her debts, selling it, even before it was finished, for 100*l*. He also undertook a new periodical, which he called the 'Idler,' not without reference to what he always asserted to be his own natural inclination to indolence, had his circumstances permitted him to indulge it. As with the 'Rambler,' he wrote almost every number himself; and as his reputation was now much higher than when he published the 'Rambler,' he found his new work proportionably more profitable. But one of the first acts of the new reign was to confer a pension of 300*l*. on him, which for the rest of his life placed him in easy circumstances, so

that he could now afford to practise the inaction which, when he wrote the 'Idler,' he could only profess and envy. It was many years before he again came before the world as an author; but no man had better earned a right to rest, and he now gave himself up to enjoy it after his own fashion. He had become so accustomed to London that he still fixed his residence there, occupying chambers in the Temple, which were frequented by a circle of friends as distinguished for ability of the highest kind as ever formed the society of anyone from whom nothing was to be obtained but instruction or entertainment. He founded a Club, known afterwards as the Literary Club, of which these visitors of his chambers were the first members; and though Burke, Reynolds, Goldsmith, and Bishop Percy were among the first members, to whom Gibbon, Sheridan, Windham, Colman, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir William Jones, Garrick, and many other men of literary eminence, and many others of high rank, were subsequently added, he, by the consent of all, continued the president till his death.

It was first a supping, and afterwards a dining Club; but the real attraction which drew together so remarkable a company was the conversation of the leading men: and, great as was the learning and subtlety of Gibbon; universal as was the knowledge, rich and varied the eloquence of Burke; deeply versed in the early poetry and the antiquarian literature of England and Ireland as was Bishop Percy; profound as was the judgment in all that belonged to his art that distinguished Reynolds; exquisite as was the taste of Windham; brilliant as was the wit and fancy of Sheridan; yet, in variety and extent of information, in acuteness and appositeness of observation, in vigour, in humour, and above all in readiness, not one of the whole body surpassed Johnson himself. And he has had the singular good fortune of having his conversations recorded with a minuteness that has been employed on the history of no other individual in the world. A young Scotch gentleman of fair family and expectations, Mr. James Boswell, had conceived so high an opinion of Johnson that he procured an introduction to him; and, finding that Johnson was inclined to encourage his acquaintance,

attached himself to him with the most singular and unwearied devotion, proposing to himself from the first to become his biographer; and, with this view, taking notes of every word that dropped from his lips, which, after Johnson's death, he worked up into a memoir, which is admitted to be one of the best biographies that has ever been written. It has been the fashion with critics to disparage Boswell himself, and even, while admitting the excellence of his book, to pronounce not only that he himself was a fool, but that his folly is the very cause of his book's goodness; since no one but the silliest of men could have deliberately and perseveringly devoted himself to the task of merely recording the sentiments and expressions of another, whether they were worth remembering and preserving or not, and since every observation of his own which he relates, and to which or on which Johnson's remarks were commonly replies or comments, show a very limited capacity, joined to a complete insensibility to the exposure he makes of his own want of talent. But it seems to me that there is a good deal of paradox in this depreciation of Boswell. Unquestionably he had many defects, and some grave faults. He was vain and restless; he was addicted to drink; drunk or sober he was apt to ask impertinent questions, silly questions, and to press for answers that the goodnature of his wiser friends withheld as long as they could: in short he was often a butt and often a bore. He aped the philosopher at whose feet he delighted to sit so unseasonably that he taught himself to look down on all whom Johnson treated roughly, condescendingly, or familiarly; speaking with a patronising tone, which must be admitted to be diverting, even of such a man as Goldsmith, 'poor Goldy,' as he presumes to call one, who, in many of the choicest gifts of intellect, had scarcely a superior; and recording all his own impertinences and sillinesses, and the rebuffs which they brought on him, with a simple absence of shame, as if there were something to be proud of in the mere fact of being sufficiently well known to Johnson to be scolded or laughed at by him. But with all this, he had also some, and those not the least important of the qualities which go to make a

good writer. He was so far from being, as Macaulay terms him, a dunce, that, in a long letter, in which, at the beginning of their acquaintance, he defends himself against some criticisms which Johnson had pronounced on a Latin epitaph which he had composed for a Scotch friend, he clearly has the advantage over his critic. Nor did he carry his veneration for Johnson so far as to surrender his independence of judgment on matters of general taste. He avowed his admiration of Gray's Odes, in spite of Johnson's habitual depreciation of that poet; and, little as Johnson liked contradiction, maintained his own opinion with earnest argument and well-chosen instances. His memory was tenacious and correct, his observation not only quick but discriminating, his fidelity to truth most conscientious. His reports of conversations and arguments are admitted to be spirited and lifelike: in the narrative parts of his work his style, if not vigorous or picturesque, is fluent and easy; it is the writing of a gentleman; while, by the confession of all, he has admirably succeeded in the design which he proposed to himself of presenting us with a real likeness of the object of his admiration; being also not undeserving of praise in selecting his idol, if an idol he was forced to have, with so much judgment and disinterestedness.

At all events, whichever view of his own talents be correct, Boswell has given us a singularly faithful picture of Johnson's character, than which no man's is fuller of marked contrasts; for his mind presented a strange union of incredulity and superstition, of strong reason with immoveable prejudice: his disposition and manners an equally curious combination of insolent rudeness with considerate and active humanity; and has effected this object by an account of his opinions and language on almost every conceivable subject, so skilfully and judiciously drawn up that, with all its minuteness, it is never wearisome; and while it tends, as all biographies are designed to do, to raise our estimate of the subject, it attains this object by the most perfect candour and fairness, not only to Johnson himself, but to all who are mentioned in connection with him. The ablest of all his friends, Burke, remarked on the appearance

of Boswell's book, that Johnson appeared greater in those pages than in his own. And, strange as it seems to say so of a professed author, Johnson was more careful in his conversation than in his writings. He would constantly defer a number of the 'Rambler' or 'Idler' till the printer was waiting for it, and then write it in such haste that he had no time to read over the manuscript: but, as he delighted more in talking, he took more pains with it. He 'used to say that he made it a constant rule to talk as well as he could, both as to sentiment and expression; by which means what had been originally effort became familiar and easy.' And conversation being thus easy to him, it has far more the appearance of ease than his writings. It is, as a rule, free from the besetting fault of his books, the fondness for long words. Macaulay has ridiculed it, declaring that it is evident that he did not think in the dialect in which he wrote, but, while he thought in English, translated his thoughts for the press into Johnsonese; and gives some amusing instances derived from a comparison of his published narrative of events that occurred to himself with his account of the same circumstances at the moment in his familiar letters. And, on the other hand, Boswell's whole book abounds with examples of the acutest reasoning expressed in simple and powerful language which cannot be surpassed for sense by any passages in his most elaborate works.

I have said he wrote but little during the last twenty years of his life; but he was not wholly idle. On the breaking out of the American war, he, as an ardent Tory, came to the support of the Ministers in a pamphlet, which he entitled 'Taxation no Tyranny,' as he had done before in the case of Wilkes, in the 'False Alarm:' but it cannot be said that they added greatly to his reputation; nor, though Boswell has probably been justified in his prediction that his last publication, the 'Lives of the Poets,' would be read by posterity 'the most generally and with the greatest pleasure,' can the praise which that prophecy is intended to imply be admitted without considerable deduction. Some of his biographical sketches (though called lives, they rarely amount to more than this) are spirited and

happy; and in some cases, as most notably in the case of Dryden and Pope, his criticisms are judicious, masterly, and, to adopt a word now much in vogue, exhaustive; but in others, as when he attacks Milton's 'Lycidas,' or all Gray's works except the 'Elegy,' he seems to proceed on principles so wholly false that no one who has read his cavils has ever agreed with him.

In spite of his scrofula he was permitted to attain, what he always greatly desired, old age; though his wish was prompted rather by a fear of death than by a keen enjoyment of life, in which he always maintained that suffering preponderated over happiness.[1]

And in the last year of his life he had greater reason than ever for such an opinion: he was attacked by two most painful complaints, dropsy and asthma; and though he bore them with great fortitude, and the conviction of his danger with manly resignation, his friends, and no man had more, or more sincere friends, became anxious that he should try a warmer climate. They tried to procure from the Government an augmentation to his income, that he might go to Italy; but there was no fund available for such a purpose, though the Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, exerted himself strenuously on his behalf, and, when he failed, proposed to supply what was needed from his own resources; and the idea had hardly been abandoned when he became so much worse that he would have been unable to take so long a journey. On the 17th of December, 1784, he died, and, as he himself had wished, was buried in Westminster Abbey. By a curious inconsistency, the monument which his friends of the Literary Club erected in his honour was placed in St. Paul's; yet it was not altogether unfitting that both the great London cathedrals should thus contribute to preserve the memory of one who made the great city his home for nearly half a century, and who, constantly extolling it as the fittest home for one who was at once, as he delighted to describe himself, both a scholar and a man of the world, regarded it as such with an affection which has been felt for it in an equal degree by few of its native sons.

[1] Boswell's Life, iv. 322.

(The Rambler, No. 19.)

I have for many years been making observations on the life of Polyphilus, a man whom all his acquaintances have, from his first appearance in the world, feared for the quickness of his discernment, and admired for the multiplicity of his attainments, but whose progress in life, and usefulness to mankind, has been hindered by the superfluity of his knowledge and the celerity of his mind.

Polyphilus was remarkable at the school for surpassing all his companions, without any visible application, and at the University was distinguished equally for his successful progress as well through the thorny mazes of science as the flowery paths of politer literature, without any strict confinement to hours of study, or remarkable forbearance of the common amusements of young men.

When Polyphilus was at the age in which men usually choose their profession, and prepare to enter into a public character, every academical eye was fixed upon him; all were curious to enquire what this universal genius would fix upon for the employment of his life; and no doubt was made but that he would leave all his contemporaries behind him, and mount to the highest honours of that class in which he should enlist himself, without those delays and pauses which must be endured by meaner abilities.

Polyphilus, though by no means insolent or assuming, had been sufficiently encouraged, by uninterrupted success, to place great confidence in his own parts; and was not below his companions in the indulgence of his hopes, and expectations of the astonishment with which the world would be struck when first his lustre should break out upon it: nor could he forbear—for whom does not constant flattery intoxicate?—to join sometimes in the mirth of his friends at the sudden disappearance of those who, having shone a while, and drawn the eyes of the public upon their feeble radiance, were now doomed to fade away before him.

It is natural for a man to catch advantageous notions of the condition which those, with whom he converses, are striving to attain. Polyphilus, in a ramble to London, fell accidentally among the physicians, and was so much pleased with the prospect of turning philosophy to profit, and so highly delighted with a new theory of fevers which darted into his imagination, and which, after having considered it a few hours, he found himself able to maintain against all the advocates for the ancient system, that he resolved to apply himself to anatomy, botany, and chemistry, and

to leave no part unconquered either of the animal, mineral, or vegetable kingdoms.

He therefore read authors, constructed systems, and tried experiments; but, unhappily, as he was going to see a new plant in flower at Chelsea, he met, in crossing Westminster, to take water, the chancellor's coach: he had the curiosity to follow him into the hall, where a remarkable cause happened to be tried, and found himself able to produce so many arguments which the lawyers had omitted on both sides, that he determined to quit physic for a profession in which he found it would be so easy to excel, and which promised higher honours and larger profits, without melancholy attendance upon misery, mean submission to peevishness, and continual interruption of rest and pleasure.

He immediately took chambers in the Temple, bought a commonplace book, and confined himself for some months to the perusal of the statutes, year-books, pleadings, and reports; he was a constant hearer of the courts, and began to put cases with reasonable accuracy. But he soon discovered, by considering the fortune of lawyers, that preferment was not to be got by acuteness, learning, and eloquence. He was perplexed by the absurdities of attorneys, and misrepresentations made by his clients of their own causes, by the useless anxiety of one and the incessant importunities of another; he began to repent of having devoted himself to a study which was so narrow in its comprehension that it could never carry his name to any other country, and thought it unworthy of a man of parts to sell his life only for money. The barrenness of his fellow-students forced him generally into other company at his hours of entertainment, and among the varieties of conversation through which his curiosity was daily wandering, he, by chance, mingled at a tavern with some intelligent officers of the army. A man of letters was easily dazzled with the gaiety of their appearance, and softened into kindness by the politeness of their address; he therefore cultivated this new acquaintance, and when he saw how readily they found in every place admission and regard, and how familiarly they mingled with every rank and order of men, he began to feel his heart beat for military honours, and wondered how the prejudices of the University should make him so long insensible of that ambition which has fired so many hearts in every age, and negligent of that calling which is, above all others, universally and invariably illustrious, and which gives, even to the exterior appearance of its professors, a dignity and freedom unknown to the rest of mankind.

These favourable impressions were made still deeper by his conversation with ladies, whose regard for soldiers he could not

observe without wishing himself one of that happy fraternity to which the female world seemed to have devoted their charms and their kindness. The love of knowledge, which was still his predominant inclination, was gratified by the recital of adventures, and accounts of foreign countries; and therefore he concluded that there was no way of life in which all his views could so completely concentre as in that of a soldier. In the art of war he thought it not difficult to excel, having observed his new friends not very much versed in the principles of tactics or fortification; he therefore studied all the military writers, both ancient and modern, and in a short time could tell how to have gained every remarkable battle that has been lost from the beginning of the world. He often showed at table how Alexander should have been checked in his conquests, what was the fatal error at Pharsalia, how Charles of Sweden might have escaped his ruin at Pultowa, and Marlborough might have been made to repent his temerity at Blenheim. He entrenched armies upon paper so that no superiority of numbers could force them, and modelled in clay many impregnable fortresses, on which all the present arts of attack would be exhausted without effect.

Polyphilus in a short time obtained a commission, but before he could rub off the solemnity of a scholar, and gain the true air of military vivacity, a war was declared, and forces sent to the Continent. Here Polyphilus unhappily found that study alone would not make a soldier; for, being much accustomed to think, he let the sense of danger sink into his mind, and felt, at the approach of any action, that terror which a sentence of death would have brought upon him. He saw that, instead of conquering their fears, the endeavour of his gay friends was only to escape them; but his philosophy chained his mind to its object, and rather loaded him with shackles than furnished him with arms. He, however, suppressed his misery in silence, and passed through the campaign with honour, but found himself utterly unable to support another.

He then had recourse again to his books, and continued to range from one study to another. As I usually visit him once a month, and am admitted to him without previous notice, I have found him, within this last half-year, deciphering the Chinese language, making a farce, collecting a vocabulary of the obsolete terms of the English law, writing an enquiry concerning the ancient Corinthian brass, and forming a new scheme of the variations of the needle.

Thus is this powerful genius, which might have extended the sphere of any science, or benefited the world in any profession

dissipated in a boundless variety, without profit to others or himself. He makes sudden irruptions into the regions of knowledge, and sees all obstacles give way before him; but he never stays long enough to complete his conquest, to establish laws, or bring away the spoils.

This is perhaps as favorable a specimen of his humorous writing as either the 'Rambler' or the 'Idler' furnishes. And it is the more to be admired because experience must admit the fidelity to nature with which the character of the hero is portrayed, and therefore the force and value of the lesson to be drawn from it. Highly as it is to be desired that all students should aim at school and university success, yet it cannot be denied that it has often been a snare to him who has attained it; and the most usual reason why it has proved such is very probably that which Johnson has here explained: the over-confidence which it has engendered in his own powers, and the degree in which it has consequently blinded him to the necessity of perseverance in one carefully selected path. In style the essay is more free than usual from his prevailing fault, of which indeed he was not unconscious, the use of long, pedantic words; though it cannot be acquitted of exhibiting some needlessly long and fatiguing sentences. The fondness for seven-leagued words,[1] is, as might be expected, more visible in the next paper, as it is one of a serious character.

(No. 106).

An assurance of unfading laurels and immortal reputation is the settled reciprocation of civility between amicable writers. To raise monuments more durable than brass, and more conspicuous than pyramids, has been long the common boast of literature; but among the innumerable architects that erect columns to themselves, far the greater part, either for want of durable materials, or of art to dispose them, see their edifices perish as they are towering to completion; and those few that for a while attract the eye of mankind are generally weak in the foundation, and soon sink by the saps of time.

No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes than a public library; for who can see the wall

[1] De Rochecliffe's translation of *sesquipedalia verba.—Woodstock.*

crowded on every side by mighty volumes, the works of laborious meditation and accurate enquiry, now scarcely known but by the catalogue, and preserved only to increase the pomp of learning, without considering how many hours have been wasted in vain endeavours, how often imagination has anticipated the praises of futurity, how many statues have risen to the eye of vanity, how many ideal converts have elevated zeal, how often wit has exulted in the eternal infamy of his antagonists, and dogmatism has delighted in the gradual advances of his authority, the immutability of his decrees, and the perpetuity of his power.

Non unquam dedit
Documenta fors majora, quam fragili loco
Starent superbi—
Insulting chance ne'or called with louder voice
On swelling mortals to be proud no more.

Of the innumerable authors whose performances are thus treasured up in magnificent obscurity, most are forgotten because they never deserved to be remembered, and owed the honours which they once obtained, not to judgment or to genius, to labour or to art, but to the prejudice of faction, the stratagems of intrigue, or the civility of adulation.

Nothing is more common than to find men whose works are now totally neglected, mentioned with praises by their contemporaries, as the oracles of their age and the legislators of science. Curiosity is naturally excited, their volumes after long enquiry are found, but seldom reward the labour of the search. Every period of time has produced these bubbles of artificial fame, which are kept up a while by the breath of fashion, and then break at once and are annihilated. The learned often bewail the loss of ancient writers whose characters have survived their works; but perhaps if we could now retrieve them, we should find them only the Granvilles, Montagues, Stepneys, and Sheffields of their time, and wonder by what infatuation or caprice they could be raised to notice.

It cannot, however, be denied that many have sunk into oblivion whom it were unjust to number with this despicable class. Various kinds of literary fame seem destined to various measures of duration. Some spread into exuberance with a very speedy growth, but soon wither and decay; some rise more slowly, but last long. Parnassus has its flowers of transient fragrance, as well as its oaks of towering height, and its laurels of eternal verdure.

Among those whose reputation is exhausted in a short time by its own luxuriance are the writers who take advantage of present

incidents, or characters which strongly interest the passions and engage universal attention. It is not difficult to obtain readers when we discuss a question which everyone is desirous to understand, which is debated in every assembly, and has divided the nation into parties; or when we display the faults or virtues of him whose public conduct has made almost every man his enemy or his friend. To the quick circulation of such productions all the motives of interest and vanity concur; the disputant enlarges his knowledge, the zealot animates his passion, and every man is desirous to inform himself concerning affairs so vehemently agitated and variously represented.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHARLES LAMB.

A.D. 1775–1834.

VERY different from the profound terseness of Bacon, from the didactic solemnity of Johnson, and even from the humour of Addison and Goldsmith, were the mind and style of the playful writer of whom it is now the turn to have a few words said of him: differing also from them in that it is as an essayist alone that he is known to us. His career was an uneventful one, and far from being of a kind which promised or offered much facility for obtaining literary distinction. He was the son of a lawyer's clerk, and was himself a clerk in the India House, an avocation in which there was as little to awaken a vein of either poetry or jocularity as could well be imagined. Moreover there was a tendency to hereditary insanity in his family, which at one period of his life attacked himself, and which in the case of his sister led to a terrible catastrophe, as in a sudden paroxysm of frenzy she murdered her mother; and the consequences of this calamity, while it gave him an opportunity for displaying his extreme tenderness of heart and devotedness of family affection, appear still more incompatible with that peace of mind which one would suppose necessary to lively writing. The essay, however, was not the kind of composition which he first selected. Being born in 1775, he was as nearly as possible of the same age as Coleridge. He formed an acquaintance with him as a school-fellow at Christ's Hospital, and in conjunction with him published a volume of poems in 1797. They fell almost stillborn from the press. He then wrote a tragedy, which no manager would accept, and a farce which he probably wished had been equally unfortunate, since, when it was accepted and acted, it was hissed off the

stage. And more than twenty years elapsed before he found out the line in which he was really calculated to shine, when he began writing essays for the 'London Magazine' with the signature of Elia. It was seen at once that the writer of poor verses and bad farce had a talent which would cause his memory to survive when many of those whom flattery was calling poets, and who were filling their pockets by the profits of their plays, had long been forgotten. His humour was thoroughly original; his command of language, though peculiar, was perfect; an air of genuine good feeling pervaded every essay as unmistakably as his wit. Even while an unsuccessful author, he had not been unappreciated by a small circle of friends, whose esteem for his talents was in itself a proof of their quality; by Coleridge, Wordsworth, by Southey, Barry Cornwall, and the author of 'Ion,' [1] who proclaimed his regard for his memory in a most affectionate and interesting biography; and now all the world was loud in its expressions of admiration. But he was not long permitted to enjoy his popularity. His health had at all times been delicate, and in 1834 a trifling accident brought on an attack of erysipelas, of which he died after a few days' illness.

His essays are of various kinds; sometimes critical, such as that on 'Sir Philip Sidney's Sonnets,' or on 'Modern Art;' sometimes historical, as when he relates how the Chinese, before the Europeans in so many important inventions, were behind them in attaining the enviable knowledge of the delicious flavour of roast sucking-pig, till Bobo had the ill or good fortune to burn down his father's house, pigsties and all. Some are philosophical and metaphysical, as when he wanders among the tombs in the Abbey, or seeks to discover why he in vain tries to like a Scotchman, and, though he venerates Quaker principles, could not live with a Quaker. But the great majority of them are expositions of quaint fancies engendered in his mind by everyday occurrences or old customs; by Valentine's Day, by All Fools' Day, by distant correspondents, by chimney-sweepers. One entire series is directed to a pretended refutation of what he called popular fallacies. And we subjoin two

[1] Serjeant, afterwards Judge Talfourd.

of these as characteristic of the rich profusion with which he could conjure up idea after idea in support of his argument and in excuse for his inclinations.

(No. 14.—That we should Rise with the Lark.)

At what precise minute that little airy musician doffs his night gear, and prepares to tune up his unseasonable matins, we are not naturalist enough to determine. But for a mere human gentleman —that has no orchestra business to call him from his warm bed to such preposterous exercises—we take ten, of half after ten (eleven, of course, during this Christmas solstice) to be the very earliest hour at which he can begin to think of abandoning his pillow. To think of it, we say, for to do it in earnest requires another half hour's good consideration. Not but there are pretty sun-risings, as we are told, and such like gawds, abroad in the world, in summer-time especially, some hours before what we have assigned; which a gentleman may see, as they say, only for getting up. But having been tempted once or twice, in earlier life, to assist at those ceremonies, we confess our curiosity abated. We are no longer ambitious of being the sun's courtiers, to attend at his morning's levees. We hold the good hours of the dawn too sacred to waste them upon such observances, which have in them besides something Pagan and Persic. To say truth, we never anticipated our usual hour, or got up with the sun (as 'tis called), to go a journey or upon a foolish whole day's pleasuring, but we suffered for it all the long hours after in listlessness and headaches; nature herself sufficiently declaring her sense of our presumption in aspiring to regulate our frail waking courses by the measures of that celestial and sleepless traveller. We deny not that there is something sprightly and vigorous, at the outset especially, in these break-of-day excursions. It is flattering to get the start of a lazy world; to conquer death by proxy in his image. But the seeds of sleep and mortality are in us, and we pay usually, in strange qualms before night falls, the penalty of the unnatural inversion. Therefore, while the busy part of mankind are fast huddling on their clothes, are already up and about their occupations, content to have swallowed their sleep by wholesale, we choose to linger a-bed and digest our dreams. It is the very time to recombine the wandering images, which night in a confused mass presented; to snatch them from forgetfulness, to shape and mould them. Some people have no good of their dreams. Like fast feeders, they gulp them too grossly to taste them curiously. We love to chew the cud of a foregone vision, to collect the scattered rays of a

brighter phantasm, or act over again, with firmer nerves, the sadder nocturnal tragedies, to drag into daylight a struggling and half vanishing nightmare, to handle and examine the terrors, or the airy solaces. We have too much respect for these spiritual communications to let them go so lightly. We are not so stupid, or so careless as that Imperial forgetter of his dreams, that we should need a seer to remind us of the form of them. They seem to us to have as much significance as our waking concerns, or rather to import us more nearly, as more nearly we approach by years to the shadowy world, whither we are hastening. We have shaken hands with the world's business; we have done with it, we have discharged ourself of it. Why should we get up? we have neither suit to solicit, nor affairs to manage. The drama has shut upon us from the fourth act. We have nothing here to expect, but in a short time a sick bed, and a dismissal. We delight to anticipate death by such shadows as night afford. We are already half-acquainted with ghosts. We were never much in the world. Disappointment early struck a dark veil between us and its dazzling illusions. Our spirits showed grey before our hairs. The mighty changes of the world already appear but the vain stuff out of which dramas are composed. We have asked no more of life than what the mimic images in playhouses present us with. Even those types have waxed fainter. Our clock appears to have struck. We are superannuated. In this dearth of mundane satisfaction, we contract politic alliances with shadows. It is good to have friends at court. The extracted media of dreams seem no ill introduction to that spiritual presence upon which, in no long time, we expect to be thrown. We are trying to know a little of the usages of that colony; to learn the language and the faces we shall meet with there, that we may be the less awkward at our first coming among them. We willingly call a phantom our fellow, as knowing we shall soon be of their dark companionship. Therefore we cherish dreams. We try to spell in them the alphabet of the invisible world; and think we know already how it shall be with us. Those uncouth shapes which, while we clung to flesh and blood, affrighted us, have become familiar. We feel attenuated into their meagre essences, and have given the hand of half-way approach to incorporeal being. We once thought life to be something; but it has unaccountably fallen from us before its time. Therefore we choose to dally with visions. The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?

(No. 15. That we should Lie down with the Lamb.)

We could never quite understand the philosophy of this arrangement, or the wisdom of our ancestors in sending us for instruction to these woolly bedfellows. A sheep, when it is dark, has nothing to do but to shut his silly eyes, and sleep if he can. Man found out long sixes—(hail, candlelight! without disparagement to sun or moon, the kindliest luminary of the three—if we may not rather style thee their radiant deputy, mild viceroy of the moon!)—we love to read, talk, sit silent, eat, drink, sleep, by candlelight. They are everybody's sun and moon. This is our peculiar and household planet. Wanting it, what savage unsocial nights must our ancestors have spent, wintering in caves and unillumined fastnesses! They must have lain about and grumbled at one another in the dark. What repartees could have passed when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbour's cheek to be sure that he understood it? This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry. It has a sombre cast (try Hesiod or Ossian) derived from the tradition of those unlantern'd nights. Jokes came in with candles. We wonder how they saw to pick up a pin, if they had any. How did they sup? what a *mélange* of chance carving they must have made of it? here one had got a leg of a goat when he wanted a horse's shoulder—there another had dipped his scooped palm in a kid-skin of wild honey when he meditated right mare's milk. There is neither good eating nor drinking in fresco. Who, even in these civilised times, has never experienced this, when at some economic table he has commenced dining after dusk, and waited for the flavour till the lights came? The senses absolutely give and take reciprocally. Can you tell pork from veal in the dark? or distinguish Sherris from pure Malaga? Take away the candle from the smoking man; by the glimmering of the left ashes, he knows that he is still smoking, but he knows it only by an inference, till the restored light, coming in aid of the olfactories, reveals to both senses the full aroma. Then how he redoubles his puffs; how he burnishes! There is absolutely no such thing as reading but by a candle. We have tried the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens, and in sultry arbours, but it was labour thrown away. Those gay motes in the beam come about you, hovering and teasing, like so many coquettes, that will have you all to their self and are jealous of your abstractions. By the midnight taper, the writer digests his meditations. By the same light we must approach to their perusal, if we would catch the flame, the odour. It is a mockery,

all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. They are abstracted works—

> Things that were born when none but the still night,
> And his dumb candle, saw his pinching throes.

Marry, daylight—daylight might furnish the images, the crude material, but for the fine shapings, the true turning and filing (as mine author has it) they must be content to hold their inspiration of the candle. The mild internal light that reveals them, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Night and silence call out the starry fancies. Milton's Morning Hymn in Paradise, we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper. Even ourself, in these our humbler lucubrations, tune our best measured cadences (Prose has her cadences) not unfrequently to the charm of the drowsier watchman, 'blessing the doors,' or the wild sweep of winds at midnight. Even now a loftier speculation than we have yet attempted courts our endeavours. We would indite something about the solar system. Betty, bring the candles.

MACAULAY.

A.D. 1800–1859.

WE have already spoken of Lord Macaulay as a historian; but it was as an essayist that he first became known; choosing, as the vehicle for his compositions, the 'Edinburgh Review,' then at the height of its reputation. His essays are chiefly historical or biographical, and as such are by no means unworthy of the reputation which he subsequently acquired by his History, of many passages in which the germ may indeed be found in these earlier productions. So closely does their style resemble that of the History that a single specimen of them will be sufficient; and the following extract from his second essay will serve to show how shrewd and correct, at a comparatively early age, was his appreciation of the characteristics of the different nations of Europe, and how natural to him was that lucidity and animation which are the chief excellences of his more matured style.

(Macaulay's Essays.—Machiavelli).

In the Italian States, as in many natural bodies, untimely decrepitude was the penalty of precocious maturity. Their early greatness and their early decline are principally to be attributed to the same cause, the preponderance which the towns acquired in the political system.

In a community of hunters or of shepherds, every man easily and necessarily becomes a soldier. His ordinary avocations are perfectly compatible with all the duties of military service. However remote may be the expedition on which he is bound, he finds it easy to transport with him the stock from which he derives his subsistence. The whole people is an army, the whole year a march. Such was the state of society which facilitated the gigantic conquests of Attila and Tamerlane.

But a people which subsists by the cultivation of the earth is in a very different situation. The husbandman is bound to the soil on which he labours. A long campaign would be ruinous to him. Still his pursuits are such as give to his frame both the active and the passive strength necessary to a soldier. Nor do they, at least in the infancy of agricultural science, demand his uninterrupted attention. At particular times of the year he is almost wholly unemployed, and can, without injury to himself, afford the time necessary for a short expedition. Thus the legions of Rome were supplied during its earlier wars. The season during which the fields did not require the presence of the cultivators sufficed for a short inroad and a battle. These operations, too frequently interrupted to produce decisive results, yet served to keep up among the people a degree of discipline and courage which rendered them, not only secure, but formidable. The archers and billmen of the Middle Ages, who, with provisions for forty days at their backs, left the fields for the camp, were troops of the same description.

But when commerce and manufactures begin to flourish a great change takes place. The sedentary habits of the desk and the loom render the exertions and hardships of war insupportable. The business of traders and artisans requires their constant presence and attention. In such a community there is little superfluous time, but there is generally much superfluous money. Some members of the society are, therefore, hired to relieve the rest from a task inconsistent with their habits and engagements.

The history of Greece is in this, as in many other respects, the best commentary on the history of Italy. Five hundred years before the Christian era, the citizens of the republics round the

Ægean Sea formed perhaps the finest militia that ever existed. As wealth and refinement advanced, the system underwent a gradual alteration. The Ionian States were the first in which commerce and the arts were cultivated, and the first in which the ancient discipline decayed. Within eighty years after the battle of Platæa, mercenary troops were everywhere plying for battles and sieges. In the time of Demosthenes, it was scarcely possible to persuade or compel the Athenians to enlist for foreign service. The laws of Lycurgus prohibited trade and manufactures. The Spartans, therefore, continued to form a national force long after their neighbours had begun to hire soldiers. But their military spirit declined with their singular institutions. In the second century after Christ, Greece contained only one nation of warriors, the savage islanders of Ætolia, who were some generations behind their countrymen in civilisation and intelligence.

All the causes which produced these effects among the Greeks acted still more strongly on the modern Italians. Instead of a power like Sparta, in its nature warlike, they had amongst them an ecclesiastical state, in its nature pacific. Where there are numerous slaves, every freeman is induced, by the strongest motives, to familiarise himself with the use of arms. The commonwealths of Italy did not, like those of Greece, swarm with thousands of these household enemies. Lastly, the mode in which military operations were conducted during the prosperous times of Italy was peculiarly unfavourable to the formation of an efficient militia. Men covered with iron from head to foot, armed with ponderous lances, and mounted on horses of the largest breed, were considered as composing the strength of an army. The infantry was regarded as comparatively worthless, and was neglected till it became really so. These tactics maintained their ground for centuries in most parts of Europe. That foot soldiers could withstand the charge of heavy cavalry was thought utterly impossible, till, towards the close of the fifteenth century, the rude mountaineers of Switzerland dissolved the spell, and astounded the most experienced generals by receiving the dreaded shock on an impenetrable forest of pikes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LYRIC POETRY.

I HAVE been led, in speaking of our poets, to separate lyric poetry from other species, partly for the sake of convenience, because, in the case of those authors who have given us specimens of lyric as well as of what, for want of any better name, I have called general poetry, their lyrics are wholly different in style from their other works (the pompous feebleness of Pope's 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day' contrasted with the exquisite playfulness of his 'Rape of the Lock;' Campbell's vigorous and spirit-stirring 'Mariners of England' compared with his sweet but soft 'Pleasures of Hope,' are a sufficient illustration of my meaning); and partly because lyric poetry is so far more universal in our language than any other kind, that, while some minstrels of first-rate excellence have employed themselves in compositions of no other class, there is not, I believe, one single poet of any reputation who has not at times sought, as it were, a relaxation from his severer labours in the lighter tones of the lyre, in more than one instance to the great enhancement of his reputation. In this respect our bards differ from their ancient models; not, indeed, that lyric poetry has not been popular always and everywhere; on the contrary, there has been no nation of whose literary history we have any knowledge that has not cultivated it. David's Psalms were probably not the earliest lyrics held in honour among the Eastern nations. Homer, the first in time, as well as in merit, of all the profane poets whose works have come down to us, records the fact that even before his day there were lyric poems, lays, ballads, or whatever other name we may choose to give them, in existence,

and that they were held in such esteem that his chosen hero, Achilles, found the best medicine for his wrath, the sweetest comfort for his sorrow, in singing over to himself the time-honoured melodies. But in the classical ages no poet trenched on the province of another: Homer and Theocritus, Virgil and Lucretius, wrote no lyrics; Sappho and Alcæus, Anacreon and Horace, never gave up their lyrics for any other style (I but follow Horace himself in declining to call his Satires poetry at all); and the short Epithalamium of Thetis by Catullus is, I believe, the only exception to this general rule.

It is not to be wondered at that lyric poetry has been so universally cultivated by our poets; for there is no kind of subject, except the didactic, which is unsuited to it. Properly speaking, it is synonymous with ode, which is but the Greek word for song written in English characters; and, therefore, in all strictness, it may be taken to embrace every kind of verse that is or may be sung. And, as we speak of war songs, triumphal songs, sacred songs (to which we have appropriated the name of hymns), as well as of love songs, drinking songs, and hunting songs, we show our feeling that neither the perils of battle, nor the deeds of heroism, nor the praises of God, are in any respect more unsuited to the lyre than more tender or more festive themes. Among the ancient poets, indeed, the loftier subjects were the more popular. The illustrious Greek lyrist, whose works have come down to us in the greatest completeness, Pindar, chose no others; all his odes are a sublime combination of the praises of conquerors with the worship due to the gods of his country; and the great Roman minstrel, Horace, who in one of his odes represents the deities and spirits whose home is in the shades below as thronging round Alcæus and Sappho while they play, declares that all assigned the palm to him who celebrated deeds of arms, and struggles endured by the champions of freedom, over the poetess, whose genius, however unrivalled in its line, was devoted to none but softer themes, to the praises of beauty and of love.

When I said that didactic themes alone were unsuited to lyric poetry, I ought, perhaps, not to overlook the fact that

Ovid represents Sappho as pronouncing mournful subjects equally ill-adapted to it. She excuses herself to Phaon for writing in what the Romans called elegiac verse, because

> My love is to be mourn'd: a mournful tone
> The Muse of Elegy has made her own;
> The genial lyre can animate or cheer;
> It ne'er was tun'd responsive to a tear.[1]

But, in putting these words into the mouth of the Lesbian poetess, Ovid was already contradicted by the practice of Horace, who had poured forth a very pathetic lamentation over a friend in lyric verse. And what is more remarkable is, that the Greeks did not consider the elegiac metre unfit to be sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. For there are no poems in the Greek language which a more trustworthy tradition records as having been actually so sung than those of Tyrtæus, and they are all written in the elegiac, or hexameter and pentameter metre; while in our own language mournful subjects, elegies, monodies, dirges, or, if there be any other name by which they are entitled, are almost invariably written in lyric metre.

I have mentioned the ancient lays or ballads, the existence of which we learn from Homer, though no specimens of such works have come down to us; but it is a kind of literature in which every part of these islands has at all times been particularly rich; and there are no writings in our language more strictly entitled to be described as lyrics, since they were not only adapted for singing, but were actually sung, and have been originally preserved from oblivion by the minstrel, who, traversing the land with his harp, made them his title to the liberality of the rich, the affection of the poor, and the hospitality of all. Printing, to which in other respects the world is so incalculably indebted, owes romance some compensation for having gradually extinguished that strange wandering race who roamed about, spreading over more than one land the

[1] Flendus amor meus est; elegeïa flebile carmen.
Non facit ad lacrymas barbitos ulla meas.
OVID, Her. XV. 7.

traditions of their own country, in which mythology indeed mingled with reality, but which were throughout so far real that they represented, with scarcely any exaggeration, the belief and spirit of their age, and were as effectual as if they had been strictly true in keeping up the best parts of that spirit, the sense of the obligations of honour and chivalrous courtesy.

We will first, therefore, examine one or two of these ancient ballads, and afterwards specimens from most of the poets of whom mention has already been made: from Ben Jonson, from Milton, from Dryden, from Pope, from Byron, as well as from others who have either written nothing but lyric poetry, or whose other works are so completely cast into the shade by their odes that it seems most fitting and most fair to speak of them under this class alone; such as Collins, Gray, Burns, Campbell, Moore. But the very fact of coupling these writers with the composers of the ancient ballads suggests the necessity of one preliminary caution, which we should bear in mind while examining the ballads. We must beware of measuring them by the same standard as compositions of a later age; we must not look in them for highly-wrought imagery, for elaborate sentiments. The refinements of art belong not to those early times. The ballads have strength, they have pathos; but the force and the tenderness are alike eminently the transcript of nature, not of art; and in the same way we must not expect the harmonious metre and carefully modulated rhythm of modern days. There are stages of style and composition as well as of language. And we may almost say that the requirements of metre were held by the minstrels of old to be fully satisfied if the final rhyme of each stanza was tolerably correct to the ear.

We will first take 'Chevy Chase,' as being of all the works of its class the most celebrated, and as being also one whose genuine antiquity seems most completely ascertained, though it will be here presented in a comparatively modern dress, in a version, that is to say, which Bishop Percy ascribes to the early part of the seventeenth century, the original being hardly intelligible in all its parts

except to antiquarians. Indeed it was the degree in which even then the obsoleteness of its language obscured its merits, 'the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age' in which it was composed, and which was lamented by the accomplished Sidney, which probably caused some not unskilful artist to modernise it. Bishop Percy, who, in his collection of ancient English poetry edited it with great care, believes it to have been written in the reign of Henry VI., a date which in his view explains the minstrel's mention of James as King of Scotland at the time when the event which is the subject of it happened, since the first monarch of that name came to the throne in the second year of Henry VI. The author speaks of himself as a younger contemporary of 'old men that know the ground' on which the events had occurred which he celebrates. 'They call it the battle of Otterbourne.' And according to his account the battle of Hambledon was fought to avenge the slaughter of the English knights on that day. Though, if the minstrel had been a good chronologer, he would not have represented the fourth 'Harry our king' as taking on himself a vow to exact such revenge, since the battle of Otterbourne, as we learn from Froissart, who has thought it of sufficient importance to deserve a special record, was fought in 1388, twelve years before the crafty Bolingbroke supplanted his cousin. But these are matters of very trivial consequence. A man who wrote in the middle of the reign of Henry VI., fifty or sixty years after the battle, might of course easily have conversed with those who remembered it as one of the striking incidents of their youth. And from such he would learn the causes and chief features of the conflict. Bishop Percy, quoting the memoirs of Carey, Earl of Monmouth, tells us that 'it was an ancient custom with the borderers of the two kingdoms, when they were at peace, to send to the Lord Wardens of the opposite Marches for leave to hunt within their districts. If leave was granted them, towards the end of summer they would come and hunt for several days together 'with their greyhounds, for deer;' but if they took this liberty unpermitted, then the Lord Warden of the border so invaded would not fail to interrupt their sport

and chastise their boldness. In the present instance the hunting took place 'unpermitted,' apparently as a deliberate defiance to a battle. It has been inferred that the author was an Englishman, because he softens the result (which, according to Froissart, was in favour of the Scotch), to a drawn battle; while he attributes the chief honour to the English, as having been the less numerous, 1,500 to 2,000, and ascribes also a more magnanimous sentiment to the English than to the Scottish monarch. King James is almost in despair at the loss of the Earl Douglas:

He has not any captain more
Of such account as he;

while King Henry, though equally grieved for Percy of Northumberland,

——trusts he has within his realm
Five hundred good as he.

Indeed in one stanza he evidently speaks of 'our English archers' as his own countrymen.

The ballad, as is very commonly the case with those early compositions, begins and ends with a moral or sentiment.

(Chevy-Chace).

God prosper long our noble king,
Our lives and safetyes all;
A woefull hunting once there did
In Chevy-Chace befall;

To drive the deer with hound and horne,
Erle Percy took his way;
The child may rue that is unborne,
The hunting of that day.

The stout Erle of Northumberland,
A vow to God did make,
His pleasure in the Scottish woods,
Three summers days to take.

The chiefest harts in Chevy-Chace,
To kill and beare away,
These tydings to Erle Douglas came,
In Scotland where he lay:

Who sent Erle Percy present word,
He wold prevent his sport.
The English Erle, not fearing that,
Did to the woods resort.

With fifteen hundred bow-men bold,
All chosen men of might,
Who knew full well in time of neede
To ayme their shafts aright.

The gallant greyhounds swiftly ran,
To chase the fallow deere:
On munday they began to hunt,
Ere day-light did appeare;

And long before high noone they had
An hundred fat buckes slaine;
Then having dined, the drovyers went
To rouze the deere againe.

The hounds ran swiftly through the woods,
The nimble deere to take,
That with their cryes the hills and dales
An eccho shrill did make.

Lord Percy to the quarry went,
To view the slaughter'd deere:
Quoth he, Erle Douglas promised
This day to meet me heere:

But if I thought he wold not come,
Noe longer wold I stay.
With that a brave young gentleman
Thus to the Erle did say:

Loe yonder doth Erle Douglas come,
His men in armour bright;
Full twenty hundred Scottish speres
All marching in our sight;

All men of pleasant Tivydale,
Fast by the river Tweede:
O cease your sports, Erle Percy said,
And take your bowes with speede:

And now with me, my countrymen,
Your courage forth advance;
For there was never champion yett,
In Scotland or in France,

That ever did on horseback come,
But if my hap it were,
I durst encounter man for man,
With him to break a spere.[1]

This is a true representation of the spirit of the Middle Ages, which was exemplified in their tournaments, and which looked on even deadly combat as not necessarily any proof of animosity, but often as merely a trial of knightly prowess and skill in the use of arms which it was dishonourable to avoid.

Erle Douglas, on his milk-white steede,
Most like a baron bold,
Rode formost of his company,
Whose armour shone like gold.

Show me, sayd he, whose men you bee,
That hunt soe boldly heere,
That, without my consent, doe chase
And kill my fallow-deere.

The first man that did answer make,
Was noble Percy hee;
Who sayd, Wee list not to declare,
Nor shew whose men wee bee:

Yet wee will spend our deerest blood,
Thy chiefest harts to slay;
Then Douglas swore a solemn oathe,
And thus in rage did say,

Ere thus I will out-braved bee,
One of us two shall dye:
I know thee well, an Erle thou art;
Lord Percy, soe am I.

But trust me, Percy, pittye it were,
And great offence to kill
Any of these our guiltlesse men,
For they have done no ill.

Let thou and I the battell trye
And set our men aside
Accurst be he, Erle Percy sayd,
By whome this is denyed.

Then stept a gallant squire forth,
Witherington was his name,
Who said, I wold not have it told
To Henry our king for shame,

That e'er my captaine fought on foote,
And I stood looking on.
You bee two Erles, sayd Witherington,
And I a squier alone:

I doe the best that doe I may,
While I have power to stand:
While I have power to wield my sword,
I'll fight with heart and hand.

We can hardly doubt that the author of this ballad was a classical scholar, when we see how close is the resemblance to the sentiment here put in Witherington's mouth of that with which Juturna, in the 'Æneid,' animates the Rutulians:

Non pudet, o Rutuli, pro cunctis talibus unam
Objectare animam? numerone an viribus æqui
Non sumus?

For shame, Rutulians, can you bear the sight
Of one exposed for all in single fight?
Can we, before the face of heaven, confess
Our courage colder, or our numbers less.[1]

Our English archers bent their bowes,
Their hearts were good and trew;
At the first flight of arrowes sent,
Full four-score Scots they slew.

Yet bides Erle Douglas on the bent,[2]
As chieftain stout and good.
As valiant captaine all unmoved,
The shock he firmly stood.

[1] DRYDEN, Æneid, xii. 346. [2] That is, steadfast in determination.

His host he parted had in three,
As leader ware and try'd,
And soon his spearmen on their foes
Bare down on every side.

Throughout the English archery
They dealt full many a wound;
But still our valiant Englishmen
All firmly kept their ground.

And throwing strait their bows away,
They grasp'd their swords so bright:
And now sharp blows, a heavy shower,
On shields and helmets light.

They closed full fast on everye side,
Noe slackness there was found;
And many a gallant gentleman
Lay gasping on the ground.

At last these two stout Erles did meet,
Like captaines of great might:
Like lyons wood, they layd on lode,
And made a cruell fight.

They fought until they both did sweat,
With swords of tempered steele,
Until the blood, like drops of rain,
They trickling downe did feele.

Yield thee, Lord Percy, Douglas said,
In faith I will thee bringe,
Where thou shalt high advanced bee
By James our Scottish king:

Thy ransome I will freely give,
And this report of thee,
Thou art the most couragious knight
That ever I did see.

Noe, Douglas, quoth Erle Percy then,
Thy proffer I doe scorn;
I will not yeelde to any Scot
That ever yett was born.

With that there came an arrow keene,
Out of an English bow,
Which struck Erle Douglas to the heart,
A deep and deadlye blow:

Who never spake more words than these,
Fight on, my merry men all
For why, my life is at an end;
Lord Percy sees my fall.

Again the similarity between the sentiments ascribed to the British and the classical chiefs is very remarkable. Thus Turnus sees an aggravation of the pain of his defeat in the fact that it is witnessed by so many enemies.

Vicisti, et victum tendere palmas
Ausonii vidêre.

The Latin chiefs have seen me beg my life.[1]

And the next stanza resembles still more closely the conduct of Æneas towards Lausus, whom he himself had just slain.

At verò ut vultum vidit morientis et ora,
Ora modis Anchisiades pallentia miris,
Ingemuit miserans graviter, dextramque tetendit.

But when, with blood and paleness overspread,
The pious prince beheld young Lausus dead,
He grieved, he wept . . .
Then stretched his hand to hold him up.'[2]

Then leaving liffe, Erle Percy tooke
The dead man by the hand;
And said, Erle Douglas, for thy life
Wold I had lost my land.

A knight amongst the Scots there was,
Which saw Erle Douglas dye,
Who streight in wrath did vow revenge
Upon the Lord Percye:

Sir Hugh Montgomerye was he call'd,
Who, with a spere, most bright,
Well mounted on a gallant steed,
Ran fiercely through the fight;

[1] Dryden, Æn. xii. 1357. [2] Dryden, Æn. x. 1164.

And past the English archers all
Without all dread or feare;
And through Erle Percyes body then,
He thrust his hatefull spere;

With such a vehement force and might
He did his body gore,
The staff ran through the other side
A large cloth-yard and more.

So thus did both these nobles dye,
Whose courage none could staine.
An English archer then perceiv'd
The noble Erle was slaine;

He had a bow bent in his hand,
Made of a trusty tree;
An arrow of a cloth-yard long
Up to the head drew hee:

Against Sir Hugh Montgomerye,
So right the shaft he sett,
The grey goose-winge that was thereon
In his heart's bloode was wett.

This fight did last till breake of day,
Till setting of the sun;
For when they rang the evening-bell
The battel scarce was done.

Of fifteen hundred Englishmen,
Went home but fifty-three;
The rest were slaine in Chevy-Chace,
Under the greene woode tree.

Next day did many widowes come,
Their husbands to bewayle;
They washt their wounds in brinish teares,
But all wold not prevayle.

Their bodyes, bathed in purple gore,
They bare with them away;
They kist them dead a thousand times
Ere they were cladd in clay.

The news was brought to Eddenborrow,
Where Scotland's king did raigne,
That brave Erle Douglas suddenlye
Was with an arrow slaine:

O heavy newes, King James did say,
Scotland may witnesse bee,
I have not any captaine more
Of such account as hee.

Like tydings to King Henry came,
Within as short a space,
That Percy of Northumberland
Was slaine in Chevy-Chace:

Now God be with him, said our king,
Sith it will noe better bee;
I trust I have, within my realme,
Five hundred good as hee:

Yett shall not Scotts nor Scotland say,
But I will vengeance take;
I'll be revenged on them all,
For brave Erle Percyes sake.

This vow full well the king perform'd
After, at Humbledowne;
In one day fifty knights were slaine
With lords of great renowne:

And of the rest, of small account,
Did many thousands dye;
Thus endeth the hunting of Chevy-Chace,
Made by the Erle Percy.

God save our king, and bless this land,
With plentye, joy, and peace;
And grant henceforth, that foul debate
'Twixt noblemen may cease.

The second ballad is especially remarkable as being nearly if not quite the only one of those ancient compositions which takes the form of a dialogue. Though its age is not precisely ascertained, it is a poem of undoubted antiquity, its date being never fixed later than the year

1500, and by many critics being put back a century further. It turns upon a plot which has been more than once illustrated in real life by somewhat similar incidents; among which not the least remarkable is the story of a former Marquis of Exeter, which has afforded a poet of our own day, Mr. Tennyson, a subject for a well-known ballad.

It is of such length that it is impossible to quote the whole of it, but the stanzas which I shall select will give you a fair idea of the pathos and truth to nature of the whole.

(The Not-Brown Mayde).

Be it ryght, or wrong, these men among on women do complayne;
Affyrminge this, how that it is a labour spent in vayne,
To love them well; for never a dele they love a man agayne:
For let a man do what he can, theyr favour to attayne,
Yet, yf a newe do them persue, theyr first true lover than
Laboureth for nought, for from her thought he is a banyshed man.

I say nat nay, but that all day it is both writ and sayd
That woman's faith is, as who sayth, all utterly decayd;
But nevertheless, ryght good witnesse in this case might be layd,
That they love true, and continue: recorde the Not-Brown Mayde:
Which, when her love came, her to prove, to her to make his mone,
Wolde not depart; for in her heart she loved but hym alone.

Then betwaine us late us dyscus what was all the manere
Betwayne them two: we wyll also tell all the payne and fere,
That she was in. Nowe I begyn, so that ye me answere;
Wherefore, all ye that present be, I pray you give an ere.
I am the knyght, I come by nyght as secret as I can;
Saying, Alas! thus standeth the case, I am a banyshed man.

The poet does not give pastoral names to his characters, like Theocritus, Virgil, and Horace. In his unpretending simplicity they are described simply as He and She.

She.

And I your wyll for to fulfyll in this wyll not refuse;
Trustynge to shew, in wordes few, that men have an yll use
(To theyr own shame) women to blame, and causeless them accuse;
Therefore to you I answere nowe, all women to excuse,—
Myne owne hart dere, with you what chere? I pray you tell anone,
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde I love but you alone.

He.

It standeth so; a dede is do whereof grete harme shall growe:
My destiny is for to dy a shamefull deth I trowe,
Or elles to flo: the one must be, none other way I knowe,
But to withdrawe as an outlawe, and take me to my bowe.
Wherefore, adue, my owne heart true! none other rede I can
For I must to the grene wode go, alone a banyshed man.

She.

O Lord, what is thys worldys blysse, that changeth as the mone!
My somers day, in lusty may, is derked before the none.
I here you say Farewell! Nay, nay, we depart nat so sone.
Why say ye so? wheder wyll ye go? Alas! what have ye done?
All my wellfare to sorrowe and care shoulde change yf ye were gone;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde I love but you alone.

He endeavours to alarm her with the thoughts of the hardships which her resolution to accompany him will entail on her. Not only will she have to endure toil, hunger, and the inclemency of the weather, but ill-fame, as clinging to him out of mere wantonness. When these considerations do not daunt her, he puts her to a still harder trial, declaring that he has met one whom he loves better. Yet even this does not shake her fidelity to him. And now he has proof sufficient, and joyfully discloses that all the disasters and difficulties of which he has spoken have been but imaginary, to test her constancy; and that he is more powerful, and has more resources to secure her happiness, than even she had imagined.

He.

Myne owne dere love, I se the prove that ye be kynde and true;
Of mayde and wyfe, in all my lyfe, the best that ever I knewe.
Be merry and glad, be no more sad, the case is changed newe;
For it were ruthe, that, for your truthe, ye should have cause to rewe.
Be not dismayed; whatsoever I sayd to you when I began;
I wyll not to the grene wode go, I am no banyshed man.

She.

These tydings be more gladd to me than to be made a quene,
Yf I were sure they sholde endure: but it is often sene,

Whan men wyll breke promyse, they speke the wordes on the splene.
Ye shape some wyle me to begyle, and stele from me I wene:
Than were the case worse than it was, and I more wo-begone;
For, in my mynde, of all mankynde I love but you alone.

He.

Ye shall not nede further to drede; I wyll not dysparage
You (God defend!), syth ye descend of so grete a lynage.
Nowe undyrstande; to Westmarlande, which is myne heritage,
I wyll you brynge; and with a rynge, by way of maryage
I wyll you take, and lady make, as shortely as I can:
Thus have you won an erlys son, and not a banyshed man.

Author.

Here may ye se, that women be, in love meek, kind, and stable.
Late never man reprove them than, or call them variable;
But, rather, pray God, that we may to them be comfortable;
Which sometyme proveth such as he loveth, yf they be charytable.
For sith men wolde that women sholde be meke to them each one,
Moche more ought they to God obey, and serve but hym alone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LYRIC POETRY (continued.)

JONSON was mentioned in the last chapter among the lyric poets, in allusion to his exquisite little ode to the moon, or Diana; that goddess, in the ancient mythology, having three characters: the moon, or Luna, in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in the shades below.

Queen and huntress chaste and fair,
Now the Sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light.
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose,
Cynthia's[1] shining orb was made
Heav'n to cheer when day did close:
Bless us then with wish'd-for light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal, shining quiver;
Give, oh give the flying hart
Time to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

And the following little love song is worthy of Anacreon himself:

[1] Cynthus was a hill in Delos, sacred to Diana and her brother Apollo.

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss within the cup
And I'll not ask for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope that thus
It might not withered be.
But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent it back to me,
Since when it grows and smells, I swear
Not of itself, but thee.

Fierce wars and faithful loves had been joined by Spencer as the natural subjects of song. And we have a few very animated lyrics from a gallant follower of Charles I. whose fortunes were ruined by his loyalty. His story is a sad one: he had been thrown into prison by the Parliament for presenting a petition from the county of Kent recommending an accommodation with the king. Afterwards, being released or escaping, he joined the French army then warring in the Low Countries, where he was wounded so severely that a report of his death reached England; and, as it continued long uncontradicted, the lady of his love, Miss Sacheverell, married another suitor. The following ode is addressed to her, under the name of Althea, while he was a prisoner of the Parliament. The last stanza deserves admiration for its magnanimity, as well as for its poetry.

(To Althea).

When Love, with unconfined wings,
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings,
To whisper at my grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair
And fettered with her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
With no allaying Thames;
Our careless heads with roses crowned,
Our hearts with loyal flames:
When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
When healths and draughts go free,
Fishes that tipple in the deep
Know no such liberty.

When, linnet-like, confinèd I
With shriller note shall sing
The mercy, sweetness, majesty,
And glories of my king:
When I shall voice aloud how good
He is, how great should be,
Th' enlarged winds that curl the flood
Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

A contemporary of Lovelace, still more distinguished as a lyric poet, Edmund Waller, had also a closer connection with the troubles of the time, being prominent alternately as a partisan of the king and of the Parliament, and, I fear it must be added, sullying his great capacity by treachery to both; at one time, as a member of Parliament, railing against the Government, at another plotting to betray the City to the king, and then, when the plot was discovered, betraying all his confederates, of whom the chiefs were hanged on his evidence. Being himself a cousin of Hampden and of Cromwell, his life was spared, though he was fined and imprisoned, and only released on condition of quitting the country. After an exile of some years, Cromwell permitted him to return to England, when he established himself at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, a county in which he had a considerable estate. And there, in 1687, he died. He rarely ventured on any compositions of length;

when he did he contrived to show the ineradicable baseness of his nature, writing, like Dryden's eulogies, first on Cromwell, and, after the Restoration, on Charles II., though he excused himself with greater wit than Dryden; for on Charles, who cared little about any man's character provided he had talents to amuse him, and who had at once taken Waller into favour, remarking to him that he thought the panegyric on Cromwell more poetical than that on himself, he replied that it was natural that it should be so, since poets generally succeeded better in fiction than in truth. He was not more constant as a lover than as a politician; Lady Dorothea Sidney was his Sacharissa, Lady Sophia Murray his Amoret, but neither of these became his wife. The first Mrs. Waller was a great city heiress: the second a Miss Bresse, of whom nothing is known beyond the fact that she became the mother of thirteen children. The following ode is a very pretty exposition of the truth that, more than beauty and more than wit, does love itself beget love. Who Flavia was has not been discovered.

(To Flavia).

Tis' not your beauty can engage
My wary heart;
The Sun, in all his pride and rage,
Has not that art,
And yet he shines as bright as you,
If brightness could our souls subdue.

There cannot well be a more delicate flattery than comparing, *not* the lady to the sun, but the sun to the brilliancy of the lady.

Tis not the pretty things you say,
Nor those you write,
Which can make Thyrsis' heart your prey;
For that delight,
The graces of a well-taught mind,
In some of our own sex we find.

No, Flavia, 'tis your love I fear;
Love's surest darts,
Those which so seldom fail him, are
Headed with hearts:
Their very shadows make us yield;
Dissemble well, and win the field.

But this, which contains an admonition to all the sex, is more celebrated, and deservedly so; though a warning against coyness might seem to have been somewhat superfluous in the reign of Charles II.

(To a Rose).

Go, lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And strives to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired.
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not think so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee,
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.

Milton's genius seems to have been suited to every kind of poetry except the purely dramatic, and many of his smaller poems belong to the class of lyrics: the exquisite monody on Lycidas, 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso.' His Ode on the Nativity of our Saviour, is one of those which by some critics has been pronounced the finest ode in the language. It is too long to quote at length, but a few stanzas will suffice to show that the praise which has been bestowed upon it has not been misplaced.

It was the winter wild,
When the Heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathise.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crown'd with olives green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was nigh.

The angels' song heard by the shepherds is thus described:

Such music as, 'tis said,
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,[1]
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung;
And cast the dark foundations deep
And to the weltering waves their oozy channels keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your tuneful harmony
Make up full concert to th' angelic symphony.

But Milton's power on sublime subjects is better seen in 'Paradise Lost.' We may form a better idea both of his versatility and of his sweetness from such a playful song as this on May morning:

[1] Borrowed from that sublime passage in Job xxxviii. 7: 'Who laid the cornerstone thereof (of the earth); when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.'

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her pure lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with an early song,
And welcome thee and wish thee long.

St. Cecilia was the goddess of music; and in the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth century it seems to have been the fashion to celebrate the day dedicated to her by an ode to be set to music. But, as a series of odes on one subject could hardly fail to lack variety, Dryden, when called upon for a contribution of the kind, imitated Pindar, who avoided the monotony which the subjects of all his odes (being only victories at the different games) seemed calculated to produce, by connecting the victory with some incident in the old national traditions, which, in however remote a degree, might justify the allusion. And thus Dryden, presuming that music formed a part of the entertainment of the banquet with which Alexander celebrated his conquest of Persia, makes the real subject of his poem the ode which he conceives Timotheus to have addressed to the conqueror.

(Alexander's Feast.)

'Twas at the royal feast for Persia won,
By Philip's warlike son;
Aloft, in awful state,
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne:
His valiant peers were placed around,
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound.
(So should desert in arms be crown'd;)
The lovely Thais by his side,
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair?
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Timotheus, plac'd on high
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touch'd the lyre;
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heavenly joys inspire.
The song began from Jove,
Who left his blissful seats above
(Such is the power of mighty love);
A dragon's fiery form belied the god:
Sublime on radiant spires he rode,
When he to fair Olympia press'd
And while he sought her snowy breast:
Then round her slender waist he curled,
And stamp'd an image of himself, a sovereign of the world.
The listening crowd admire the lofty sound,
A present deity, they shout around:
A present deity the vaulted roofs rebound:
With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

Olympia was the mother of Alexander; but his vanity, for we cannot dignify such a feeling with the name of ambition, incited him to claim Jupiter as his father, that thus, like Hercules and other famous heroes, he might after death be accounted a demigod. And it is to gratify the same passion that in the next stanza Timotheus introduces Bacchus, so as to hint a comparison between the king and the god one of whose exploits had been the conquest of India.

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician sung,
Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young:
The jolly god in triumph comes,
Sound the trumpets! beat the drums!
Flush'd with a purple grace
He shews his honest face,
Now give the hautboys breath! he comes! he comes!
Bacchus ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:

Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Sooth'd with the sound, the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again;
And thrice he routed all his foes; and thrice he slew the slain.
The master saw the madness rise;
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;
And while he Heaven and earth defied,
Chang'd his hand, and check'd his pride.
He chose a mournful muse
Soft pity to infuse:
He sung Darius great and good,
By too severe a fate,
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
Fallen from his high estate,
And welt'ring in his blood;
Deserted, at his utmost need,
By those his former bounty fed:
On the bare earth expos'd he lies,
With not a friend to close his eyes.
With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his alter'd soul,
The various turns of chance below;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

This stanza is very beautiful: Dryden has accumulated with great skill the circumstances which fed the heart with the acutest misery. It is far worse to have fallen from a high estate than never to have enjoyed prosperity. Dante has told us

Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria;

or, as Byron has translated it,

The greatest of all woes
Is to remind us of our happy days
In misery;

while the desertion of friends is the very climax of Macbeth's despair. The love which in the next stanza the poet represents as akin to pity is not of a very high character; but

it is suitable to the situation of the king with Thais at his side.

The mighty master smil'd to see
That love was in the next degree;
'Twas but a kindred sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love.
Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
Honour but an empty bubble;
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying:
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, oh think, it worth enjoying:
Lovely Thais sits beside thee,
Take the good the gods provide thee.
The many rend the skies with loud applause
So Love was crown'd, but Music won the cause.
The prince, unable to conceal his pain
Gaz'd on the fair
Who caus'd his care,
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again:
At length, with love and wine at once oppress'd,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again;
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain:
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark! hark! the horrid sound
Has rais'd up his head,
As awak'd from the dead,
And amaz'd, he stares around.
Revenge! revenge! Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise:
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain,
Inglorious on the plain:

Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew,
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.
The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.

The images set before the king in the preceding lines are in strict conformity with Greek ideas of the long-standing enmity between Greece and barbarian Asia; and as such admirably calculated to rouse Alexander's anger, and excite him to deeds of destruction. Herodotus represents the Persian war not as an isolated attack on the Greeks, but as one of a series of mutual injuries and retaliations. According to his theory it was an attempt of Darius to avenge the abduction of Helen and the fall of Troy, which was the consequence of that treachery. But that was not the beginning of the national animosities; their origin was to be traced through the similar outrages committed on Medea, on Europa, and Io: and so now the conqueror of a later Darius was led to remember that he would but be requiting the destruction of Athens, and the ravages of the former Darius and Xerxes, if he, in his turn, gave Persepolis to the flames. When the poet points out that the Greeks in battle slain remained unburied, he is introducing with great propriety what was looked on as a peculiar aggravation of the miseries of death; as those who had not received the rites of sepulture were not allowed to be conveyed across the Styx, but were detained on the confines of Tartarus, more lurid and cheerless than Hell itself, so the Sibyl tells Æneas:

Hæc omnis, quam cernis, inops inhumataque turba est:
Portitor ille, Charon: hi, quos vehit unda, sepulti.
Nec ripas datur horrendas, nec rauca fluenta
Transportare priùs, quàm sedibus ossa quiêrunt.[1]

[1] Æn. vi. 325.

The ghosts rejected are the unhappy crew
Deprived of sepulchres and funeral due:
The boatman Charon; those, the buried host,
He ferries over to the farther coast:
Nor dares his transport vessel cross the waves
With such whose bones are not composed in graves.[1]

Thus, long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learned to blow,
While organs yet were mute;
Timotheus, to his breathing flute
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire
At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown:
He rais'd a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

Pope followed Dryden's example, taking for his theme a subject of the classical mythology. We will pass over the two first stanzas, which contain merely a general description of the power of music, in which a not very successful attempt is made to imitate by the cadence of the verse the sweet 'warbling' of the lute, the loudness of the trumpet, and the 'deep majestic' peal of the 'solemn organ.' In the third stanza the poet grows more particular, taking Orpheus, the great poet of Horace, for his hero; partly as the minstrel of the Argonauts; but dwelling more copiously on his descent to Hell to recover Eurydice, which furnishes Virgil with the most beautiful of all the episodes with which he varies the 'Georgics.'

But when our country's cause provokes to arms,
How martial music ev'ry bosom warms;
So when the first bold vessel dared the seas,

[1] Dryden, Georg. vi. 445.

High on the stern the Thracian rais'd his strain,
While Argo saw her kindred trees
Descend from Pelion to the main,
Transported demigods stood round,
And men grew heroes at the sound,
Inflam'd with glory's charms;
Each chief his sevenfold shield display'd,
And half unsheath'd the shining blade,
And seas, and rocks, and skies rebound
To arms! to arms! to arms!
But when, through all th' infernal bounds,
Which flaming Phlegeton surrounds,
Love, strong as death, the poet led
To the pale nations of the dead,
What sounds were heard,
What scenes appear'd,
O'er all the dreary coasts!
Dreadful gleams,
Dismal screams,
Fires that glow,
Shrieks of woe,
Sullen moans,
Hollow groans,
And cries of tortur'd ghosts!
But hark! he strikes the golden lyre;
And see the tortur'd ghosts respire,
See, shady forms advance!
Thy stone, O Sisyphus, stands still,
Ixion rests upon his wheel,
And the pale spectres dance;
The Furies rest upon their iron beds,
And snakes uncurl'd hang list'ning round their heads.

The trisyllabic verse is a sad jingle; but the end of this stanza is a manifest imitation, one might almost say a translation, of Virgil.

At cantu commotæ Erebi de sedibus imis
Umbræ ibant tenues, simulacraque luce carentum.
. . . . . .
Quin ipsæ stupuere domus, atque intima leti
Tartara, cœruleosque implexæ crinibus angues
Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora;
Atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis. [1]

[1] Georg. iv. 484.

He dared amidst the trembling ghosts to sing,
And stood before th' inexorable king,
Th' infernal troops like passing shadows glide,
And, listening, crowd the sweet musician's side.

. . . . . .

The Furies hearken and their snakes uncurl,
Ixion seems no more his pain to feel,
But leans attentive on his standing wheel.[1]

But the example of Virgil might have warned Pope not to attempt to give the song itself which won Eurydice's release. Orpheus was a demigod, or at least of semi-divine parentage: the son of the Muse Calliope; and the Roman poet's unerring taste showed him that no mortal could worthily represent or give an adequate idea of the strains which such a being would utter, still less perhaps those which would prevail on a deity so generally inexorable as Pluto. Nor can it be said that the song which Pope represents Orpheus to have sung seems especially calculated to have had such power. The considerations which he suggests are not very affecting; and the alternative which he presents to the King of the shades below, either to release the wife, or take the husband also, would not greatly perplex him, since death would surely be the husband's fate at no distant time.

By the streams that ever flow,
By the fragrant winds that blow,
O'er the Elysian flow'rs;
By those happy souls who dwell
In yellow meads of asphodel,
Or amaranthine bow'rs;
By the heroes' armed shades,
Glitt'ring through the gloomy glades;
By the youths that died for love,
Wand'ring in the myrtle grove,
Restore, restore Eurydice to life:
Oh take the husband, or restore the wife.
He sung, and hell consented
To hear the poet's prayer:
Stern Proserpine relented,
And gave him back the fair;
Thus song could prevail
O'er death, and o'er hell,

[1] DRYDEN, Georg. iv. 695.

A conquest how hard, and how glorious!
Though Fate had fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet Music and Love were victorious.
But soon, too soon, the lover turns his eyes:
Again she falls, again she dies, she dies;
How wilt thou now the fatal sisters move?
No crime was thine, if 'tis no crime to love.

This again is imitated from Virgil, but more successfully:

Quo fletu Manes, quâ numina voce moveret?

is beautifully expanded into the last two lines.

Now under hanging mountains,
Beside the falls of fountains,
Or where Hebrus wanders,
Rolling in Mæanders,
All alone,
Unheard, unknown,
He makes his moan;
And calls her ghost,
For ever, ever, ever lost!
Now with furies surrounded,
Despairing, confounded,
He trembles, he glows,
Amidst Rhodope's snows:
See, wild as the winds, o'er the desert he flies;
Hark! Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanal's cries—
Ah! see, he dies!
Yet even in death Eurydice he sung,
Eurydice still trembled on his tongue;
Eurydice the woods,
Eurydice the floods,
Eurydice the rocks and hollow mountains rung.

These last five lines, however, must be admitted to be equal in fidelity, and superior in spirit, to Dryden's version.

Then when his head from his fair shoulders torn,
Washed by the waters was in Hebrus borne,
Even then his trembling tongue invoked his bride,
With his last voice "Eurydice!" he cried,
"Eurydice!" the rocks and river-banks replied.[1]

[1] DRYDEN, Georg. 763.

Music the fiercest grief can charm,
And Fate's severest rage disarm;
Music can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and madness please:
Our joys below it can improve,
And antedate the bliss above.
This the divine Cecilia found,
And to her Maker's praise confin'd the sound.
When the full organ joins the tuneful quire,
Th' immortal powers incline their ear;
Borne on the swelling notes, our souls aspire
While solemn airs improve the sacred fire;
And angels lean from heav'n to hear.
Of Orpheus now no more let poets tell,
To bright Cecilia greater pow'r is giv'n:
His numbers rais'd a shade from hell,
Hers lift the soul to heaven.

CHAPTER XXV.

GRAY.

A.D. 1716–1771.

THOMAS GRAY is one of those to whom allusion has been made as having confined himself entirely to lyric poetry. His life was too uneventful to afford any great materials for a biographical sketch. He was the son of a London attorney in good practice; and having been educated at Eton and at Peterhouse, Cambridge, contracted an intimacy with Horace Walpole, the youngest son of the celebrated minister, Sir Robert Walpole, with whom, in 1738, at the age of twenty-two, he agreed to travel on the Continent, a plan to which the incompatibility of their tempers soon put an end. They parted at Florence, and Gray returned to Cambridge, where he passed the greater part of his life; varying the scene by occasional visits to Stoke, in Buckinghamshire, a place which, partly on account of its nearness to Eton, he regarded with peculiar fondness, and which has given occasion to his 'Ode on Eton College,' and to the 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard,' which is usually if not invariably considered his masterpiece. Though he wrote none but lyric poetry, he wrote very little of that. His taste was so fastidious that he spent more time in polishing a single stanza than others have often taken to compose a poem. And though the fruit of his labour is seen in a rare perfection of finish, yet it is hard to forbear the wish that an inferior degree of scrupulousness had left him leisure to be more fertile. For though, as is well-known, Johnson has disparaged nearly all his poems except the Elegy; and his grandest odes, that on 'The Progress of Poesy' and 'The Bard' with especial vehemence; critics in general have, I think, expressed a far more judicious opinion when they have pronounced those odes and especially 'The Bard,' deficient

in no quality calculated to give a work immortality; neither in loftiness of ideas, nor in richness of imagery, nor in harmony of arrangement, nor in variety of appropriate language.

He had always laboured under extreme delicacy of health; and his constitution seems to have been entirely worn out when, in the summer of 1771, he died of the gout. A subsequent owner of Stoke Park has erected a monument to his honour in the churchyard, the same that has been already mentioned as the scene of his Elegy, engraving on it the epitaph with which the Elegy closes, as most appropriate to the poet himself.

(The Bard.)

The subject of this ode is the old tradition, now long exploded, that Edward I., having subdued Wales, put the bards to death, from fear lest their spirit-stirring songs might revive the warlike spirit of the natives and excite them to rebellion. One bard is represented as having escaped to the summit of the rock which overhangs the Conway, and as, from that inaccessible eminence, denouncing vengeance on the British king, a vengeance to be fulfilled in the calamities which befell his posterity. The prophecy is in some degree imitated from the shield of Æneas, as described in the eighth book of the Æneid.

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king,
Confusion on thy banners wait;
Though fann'd by conquest's crimson wing,
They mock the air with idle state![1]
Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!'
Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride
Of the first Edward scatter'd wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Gloster stood aghast in speechless trance!
To arms! cried Mortimer, and couch'd his quiv'ring lance.

[1] 'Mocking the air with colours idly spread.'
SHAKESPEARE, King John, v. 1.

On a rock whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air;) [1]
And with a master's hand, and prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre:—
'Hark! how each giant oak and desert cave
Sigh to the torrent's awful voice beneath;
O'er thee, O king! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser numbers breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To highborn Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.

'Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hush'd the stormy main: [2]
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred,[3] whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topp'd head.
On dreary Arvon's shore they lie,
Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale:
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famish'd eagle screams, and passes by.
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear [4] as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries.
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a grieſly band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land:

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[1] 'Th' imperial ensign, which, full high advanced,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind.'
MILTON, Paradise Lost, i. 536.

[2] 'Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song.'
Midsummer Night's Dream, ii. 1.

[3] Cadwallo, Urien, and Modred are the names of ancient bards of Wales, supposed here to be contemporaries of him who invoked them.

[4] Imitated from Shakespeare—
'As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.'—*Julius Cæsar*, ii. i.

With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.
Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright,
The shrieks of death, through Berkley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonizing king! [1]
She wolf [2] of France, with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,
From thee be born, who [3] o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of Heav'n. What terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with flight combin'd,
And sorrow's faded form, and solitude behind.

'Mighty victor, mighty lord,
Low on his funeral couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable warrior [4] fled?
Thy son is gone; he rests among the dead.
The swarm that in thy noontide beam were born?
Gone to salute the rising morn.
Fair [5] laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While, proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his ev'ning prey.

'Fill high the sparkling bowl,
The rich repast prepare,
Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:
Close by the regal chair
Fell thirst and famine [6] scowl
A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.' [7]

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[1] Edward II. [2] Isabella, wife of Edward II.
[3] Edward III. who so nearly subjugated France, the country of Isabella.
[4] The Black Prince, who died before his father.
[5] Allusion is here made to the festive disposition of Richard II.
[6] According to one account, Richard II. was starved to death.
[7] '——and Death
Grinned horribly a ghastly smile.'—*Paradise Lost*, ii. 845.

Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long years of havoc urge their destin'd course,
And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye tow'rs of Julius, London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murder fed,
Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,
And spare the meek [1] usurper's holy head,
Above, below, the rose of snow,[2]
Twin'd with her blushing foe, we spread!
The bristl'd boar,[3] in infant gore,
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom,
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

'Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.
(The web is wove, the work is done.)
Stay, oh, stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unbless'd, unpity'd here to mourn;
In yon bright track that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height,
Descending slow, their glitt'ring skirts unroll,
Visions of glory! spare my aching sight,
Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.
All hail! ye genuine kings,[4] Britannia's issue hail!

'Girt with many a baron bold,
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a form divine!
Her eye proclaims her[5] of the Briton line;

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[1] Henry VI., an usurper because Henry IV., his grandfather, had no hereditary right to the throne.

[2] The rose of York.

[3] The boar was the cognizance of Richard III., wallowing in the infant gore of his murdered nephews.

[4] Henry VII., as being descended from Owen Glendower, is here spoken of as a king of Welsh blood, whose advancement shall compensate Wales for her present overthrow.

[5] Queen Elizabeth.

Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
Attemper'd sweet to virgin grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air?
What strains of vocal transport round her play?
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and, soaring as she sings,
Waves in the eye of Heaven her many-coloured wings.
The verse adorn again
Fierce War, and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest,
In buskin'd measures move,
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.
A voice, as of the cherub-choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear,
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That, lost in long futurity, expire.

'Fond, impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud,
Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the orb of day?
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me: with joy I see
The different doom our fates assign.
Be thine despair and sceptr'd care;
To triumph, and to die, are mine.'

He spoke, and headlong, from the mountain's height,
Deep in the roaring tide, he plunged to endless night.

The churchyard which suggested the following elegy is, as has been already mentioned, that of Stoke, in Buckinghamshire. Even Johnson, who praises no other of Gray's works, says of this that 'it abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and to which every bosom returns an echo.'

(Elegy written in a Country Churchyard.)

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness, and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that, from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstacy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of their soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy to mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious Truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous Shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride,
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life,
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonoured dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn,
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies would he rove;
Now drooping, woeful, wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

'One morn I miss'd him on th' accustom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he:

'The next with dirges due in sad array,
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
'Grav'd on the stone, beneath yon aged thorn.'

(The Epitaph.)

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown;
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send;
He gave to mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

COLLINS.

A.D. 1720—1756.

IT has been mentioned before that different odes have been pronounced by different critics the finest in the language. Johnson gives the palm to that of Collins on the passions, extolling the picture of Hope as 'beautiful almost beyond imitation.' 'In what an exalted light,' he continues, 'does the picture of that delightful being place this great master of poetical imagery and harmony! what varied sweetness of numbers! what delicacy of judgment and expression! How characteristically does Hope prolong her train, repeat her soothing closes, call upon her associate, Echo, for the same purposes, and display every pleasing grace peculiar to her.' . . . 'The descriptions of joy, jealousy, and revenge are excellent, though not equally so. Those of melancholy and cheerfulness are superior to everything of the kind.'

The life of the poet himself, whose masterpiece elicited this praise, was brief and miserable. He was the son of a hatter at Chichester, who gave him the best possible education, first at Winchester, and afterwards at Magdalen College, Oxford. But this effort had exhausted his father's means; and having gone to London, in the hope of maintaining himself by his talents, he for some time suffered severe privations: he was no sooner relieved from want by

the death of an uncle, who left him 2000*l.*, than, as Johnson says, he was assailed by more dreadful calamities, disease and insanity. He was only thirty-six when he died in a lunatic asylum in his native city. He, like Gray, has confined himself to lyric poetry; with the exception of four brief Oriental eclogues, which are not worthy of his other efforts. Of his odes many are pretty and imaginative; nearly all are written with purity and vigour; but that on the passions, of which Johnson's eulogy has been quoted above, is universally considered his masterpiece.

(Ode to the Passions.)

When Music, heavenly maid, was young,
While yet in early Greece she sung,
The Passions oft, to hear her shell,
Throng'd around her magic cell,
Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting,
Possess'd beyond the Muse's painting;
By turns they felt the glowing mind
Disturb'd, delighted, rais'd, refin'd.
Till once, 'tis said, when all were fir'd,
Fill'd with fury, rapt, inspir'd,
From the supporting myrtles round
They snatch'd her instruments of sound,
And as they oft had heard apart
Sweet lessons of her forceful art,
Each, for madness rul'd the hour,
Would prove his own expressive power.

First Fear his hand, its skill to try,
Amid the chords bewilder'd laid,
And back recoil'd, he knew not why,
Ev'n at the sound himself had made.

Next Anger rush'd, his eyes on fire,
In lightnings own'd his secret stings;
In one rude clash he struck the lyre,
And swept with hurried hand the strings.

With woeful measures wan Despair,
Low sullen sounds his grief beguil'd;
A solemn, strange, and mingled air,
'Twas sad by fits, by starts 'twas wild.
But thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair

What was thy delighted measure?
Still it whisper'd promis'd pleasure,
And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail!
Still would her touch the strain prolong,
And from the rocks, the wood, the vale,
She called on Echo still through all the song;
And where her sweetest theme she chose,
A soft responsive voice was heard at every close,
And Hope, enchanted, smil'd, and wav'd her golden hair;
And longer had she sung—but, with a frown,
Revenge, impatient, rose;
He threw his blood-stain'd sword in thunder down,
And with a withering look,
The war-denouncing trumpet took,
And blew a blast so loud and dread,
Were ne'er prophetic sounds so full of woe;
And ever and anon he beat
The doubling drum with furious heat;
And though sometimes, each dreary pause between,
Dejected Pity at his side
Her soul-subduing voice applied,
Yet still he kept his wild unaltered mien,
While each strain'd ball of sight seem'd bursting from his head.
Thy numbers, Jealousy, to nought were fix'd,
Sad proof of thy distressful state;
Of differing themes the veering song was mix'd,
And now it courted Love; now, raving, called on Hate.
With eyes uprais'd, as one inspir'd,
Pale Melancholy sat retir'd,
And from her wild sequester'd seat,
In notes by distance made more sweet,
Pour'd through the mellow horn her pensive soul:
And, dashing soft from rocks around,
Bubbling runnels join'd the sound;
Through glades and glooms the mingled measure stole,
Or o'er some haunted streams with fond delay,
Round an holy calm diffusing,
Love of peace and lonely musing,
In hollow murmurs died away.
But, oh, how alter'd was its sprightlier tone!
When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue,
Her bow across her shoulder flung,
Her buskins gemm'd with morning dew,
Blew an inspiring air, that dale and thicket rung,
The hunter's call, to Faun and Dryad known;

The oak-crown'd sisters, and their chaste-eyed queen,
Satyrs and sylvan boys were seen,
Peeping from forth their alleys green;
Brown Exercise rejoic'd to hear,
And Sport leapt up, and seiz'd his beechen spear.
Last came Joy's ecstatic trial,
He, with viny crown advancing,
First to the lively pipe his hand addrest,
But soon he saw the brisk, awakening viol,
Whose sweet entrancing voice he loved the best.
They would have thought, who heard the strain,
They saw in Tempe's vale her native maids,
Amidst the festal sounding shades,
To some unwearied minstrel dancing,
While, as his flying fingers kiss'd the strings,
Love fram'd with Mirth a gay fantastic round,
Loose were her tresses seen, her zone unbound,
And he amidst his frolic play,
As if he would the charming air repay,
Shook thousand odours from his dewy wings.

O Music, sphere-descended maid,
Friend of pleasure, wisdom's aid,
Why, goddess, why, to us denied,
Lay'st thou thy ancient lyre aside?
As in that lov'd Athenian bower,
You learn'd in all-commanding power,
Thy mimic soul, O nymph endear'd,
Can well recall what then it heard.
Where is thy native simple heart,
Devote to virtue, fancy, art?
Arise, as in that elder time,
Warm, energetic, chaste, sublime!
Thy wonders in that godlike age,
Fill thy recording sister's page—
'Tis said, and I believe the tale,
Thy humblest reed could more prevail,
Had more of strength, diviner rage,
Than all which charms this laggard age;
Ev'n all at once together found
Cæcilia's mingled world of sound—
Oh, bid our vain endeavours cease,
Revive the just designs of Greece,
Return in all thy simple state!
Confirm the tales her sons relate!

CHAPTER XXVI.

BURNS.

A.D. 1759–1796.

THE lyric poets of whom we have as yet spoken have been exclusively English; but, towards the end of the last century, Scotland, whose sons had recently been distinguishing themselves so greatly in the field of history, and who had even made some contributions, far from destitute of merit, to the general poetry[1] and to the drama of the kingdom, sent forth into the lyrical arena also one whose genius qualified him to contend with the very sweetest of the southern bards, and who, by adapting his poems almost invariably to the popular Scotch airs, established his claim to the title of the national poet of his country so firmly that even the loftier genius of Scott has failed to deprive him of it.

Robert Burns, son of William Burns, a working gardener, was born, in January 1759, in the suburbs of Ayr. An autobiographical sketch of his early years, which he has left us, affirms that, even while a child at school, he was distinguished for a retentive memory. It records, too, that among the books which took the strongest hold on his imagination were two which filled him with a desire to become a soldier, a life of Hannibal and a life of Wallace. Perhaps the impression made by the latter may have helped to inspire the noble lyric 'Scots, wha hae.' But these did not compose the whole of his library. Even while still a boy he continued gradually to pick up a fair collection of books, consisting chiefly of poetry and songs, the works of Shakespeare,

[1] Beattie and Thompson may be especially mentioned, whose works, though not of the highest class, were very popular in their day.

Pope, and Allan Ramsay being among them.[1] His father, who saw a quickness in him sufficient to qualify him for something better than manual labour, encouraged his taste for reading; and when he was nineteen procured him instruction in trigonometry and mensuration, hoping that he might learn enough to become a surveyor. Unhappily his own inclinations were of a less practical character. He was always falling in love, and it may be inferred that his wooing was often rough, as he was commonly disappointed. Still more fatal to his advancement was a fondness for drink, which involved him in frequent quarrels.

He took a dislike to mathematics and the life of a surveyor, but thought he might succeed as a flax-dresser, and went to Irvine for that purpose; but in a drunken carousal he set fire to the house, and burnt it and all the flax, and very nearly himself and his brother also. His next step was to take a farm, but he had neither capital nor perseverance to withstand the losses of two successive bad seasons. Moreover he had learnt that he had a talent for poetry, and had begun to write, and to spend more time on his pen than on his plough. But his first essays did not give him much credit with his neighbours. The presbytery thought his language too free on subjects on which they were not inclined to listen to jesting, and it was proposed to take formal notice of some of his expressions. The threatened displeasure of the Kirk, and some fresh entanglements of love, led him to think of emigrating; and he had procured an appointment to keep the accounts of an estate in Jamacia, when one of the measures which he took as a preparation for his departure led to the abandonment of the idea, and changed the whole course of his life.

To provide the necessary funds for his voyage, he was recommended by a gentleman, who had formed a favorable opinion of some of them, to publish a small volume of poems: they came out in 1786, and their success was so decided that he laid aside all thoughts of leaving the country, and took up his residence in Edinburgh. For everything but

[1] A poet of considerable celebrity in Scotland, who died about the time that Burns was born.

his poetical fame it was an unfortunate change of purpose. He was received with open arms by persons of far higher rank in society and of far larger means than his: their praises turned his head, and he acquired a taste for gay living to which he was too well inclined before, and, its inevitable consequence, a distaste for work. He was elected a member of the Caledonian Hunt Club, and became a popular dancer and singer at what have been truly called the orgies of that society. His convivial talents, joined to his reputation for genius of a higher kind, speedily opened to him the doors of people of the highest rank: he became a welcome guest at their houses, and travelled about the country, visiting and banqueting, but wholly neglecting all means of earning a livelihood. In a letter written in 1787 he calls himself, 'just as usual, a rhyming, verse-making, raking, purposeless, idle fellow.' In fact his great acquaintances were helping rapidly to ruin him. The next year he took a step which sometimes tends to make a man steady: he married; but his marriage produced but little alteration in him. He took a farm in Nithsdale; but, as before, neglected it, and lost in it in consequence the little money he had made by his poems. After little more than two years he sold off his stock, and obtained a place at the Excise-office at Dumfries. But this appointment, like every other measure designed for his benefit, only helped to plunge him deeper in the mire. His duties led him among dealers in liquor, and thus presented him with fresh temptations for indulging his worst failing; though, on more than one occasion, he distinguished himself by both address and courage in his dealings with smugglers. The breaking out of the French Revolution infected him, as we have seen that it infected other poets, with a fierce political enthusiasm. He became an ardent revolutionist. Having captured a smuggling vessel, he purchased her carronades and sent them as a present to the Convention; and the language in which he continually denounced the proceedings of his own Government was so unguarded as to give offence to his superiors, who threatened to deprive him of his post. One of his apologies, intended to do away with the effect of one outbreak of the kind, is lamentably characteristic. He wrote,

'Dear sir, I know I was drunk last night, but I am sober this morning.' But he did not alter his conduct. The Commissioners of Excise, under whose orders he was, treated him with all possible indulgence; though they were forced to summon him before them, they accepted his promises of amendment, and contented themselves with reprimanding him. But even the danger of dismissal, which would have involved absolute starvation, could not render him prudent. His political violence gradually alienated all those who to the will united the power to befriend him. His increasing habits of drunkenness ruined his health; and his end, which was near, was sadly characteristic. At the beginning of 1796, as he was returning home in a helpless state of intoxication, he fell asleep in the snow, and the chill brought on an illness of which in the summer of the same year he died.

From time to time he had published fresh poems, and fresh editions, with additions, of his original volume. Subsequent generations have pardoned his infirmities for the sake of the genius displayed in them, and in the present day few poets are spoken of with more unvarying admiration. It is not difficult to discover to what this popularity is owing. He is above all things the poet of feeling. The quality, as he says in one of his letters, which he prized above every other, as the 'very essence of a song or ballad,' was simplicity; and so everything in his work is genuine: nothing is put on or affected, and, being natural, the sentiments expressed in his songs come home to the heart of every reader. It is remarkable that, though habituated from his childhood to rural scenes, he has very rarely turned aside to describe the beauties of nature. As a countryman of his who was also a poet, Hogg, has truly said, 'External nature never seems to have kindled or elevated his imagination; she had no charms for him, unless when she recalled to his mind the vision of some old love or departed happiness.' He was sensible of the deficiency: he represents the Muse herself as telling him,

> Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
> To paint with Thompson's landscape glow;

and wisely confined his efforts to do what he could do far better than Thompson: to paint all the varied workings of the mind under the influence of love in all its phases, in the moments of hope, anticipation, enjoyment, anxiety, and regret. Some of his poems exhibit a keen humour and lively wit, such as 'Tam O'Shanter.' One, to which he gave the name of 'The Vision,' is conceived and written with a force and sustained dignity of which his lesser poems give no indication. He represents 'a heavenly seeming fair' greeting him 'with an elder sister's air,' and announcing herself as 'his native Muse,' bidding him

No longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low;
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

And she proceeds to tell him what qualities she has seen in him to render him deserving of her protection, and by what studies he is to earn her favour.

(The Vision.)

Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

They Scotia's race among them share:
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain
With tillage-skill,
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blithe o'er the hill.

Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil
For humble gains,
And make his cottage scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

Some, bounded to a district space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

Of these am I,—Coila my name,
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

Or, when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd every floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In every grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

When ripen'd fields, and azure skies
Called forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By Passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.

I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with Thompson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow,
Warm on the heart.

Yet all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And, trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.
'And wear thou this,' she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head;
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

His admiration of revolution did not deaden his national sentiments of tenderness for the beauteous departed Queen of Scots; and one of the few poems in which he does not speak in his own person is dedicated to an attempt to portray the feelings of the hapless Mary.

(Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots.)

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daises white
Out o'er the grassy lea:
Now Phœbus cheers the crystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the weary wight,
That fast in durance lies.

Now lav'rocks wake the merry morn,
Aloft on dewy wing;
The merle in his noontide bower,
Makes woodland echoes ring;
The mavis mild, wi' many a note,
Sings drowsy day to rest;
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:
The meanest hind in fair Scotland,
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang.

I was the Queen o' bonnie France,
Where happy I hae been;
Fu' lightly raise I in the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:
And I'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
And mony a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands
And never-ending care.

But as for thee, thou false woman,
My sister and my fae,
Grim vengeance, yet, shall whet a sword,
That through thy soul shall gae;
The weeping blood in woman's breast,
Was never known to thee,
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe,
Frae woman's pitying e'e.

My son! my son! may kinder stars
Upon thy fortune shine;
And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
That ne'er wad blink on mine!
God keep thee frae thy mother's faes,
Or turn their hearts to thee:
And where thou meet'st thy mother's friend,
Remember him for me!

Oh! soon to me may summer suns
Nae mair light up the morn!
Nae mair, to me, the autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death,
Let winter round me rave,
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring
Bloom on my peaceful grave.

The following ode supplies one of the few instances of his taking inanimate nature for his subject. The comparison of the uprooted flower to the artless but deceived maiden, and again to the imprudent and ruined bard (both drawn too truly from his own experience), is both conceived and expressed in the true spirit of poetry.

(To a Mountain Daisy.)

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour,
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckled breast,
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield
But thou beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies.

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betrayed,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd is laid,
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd,
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er.

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink,
Till wrenched of every stay but heaven,
He ruin'd, sink.

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine,—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom.

But, as has been said before, his love effusions were those most natural to him. And the most powerfully drawn among them are those in which he paints the pain of separation from the beloved object. The end of the second stanza of the first of the three following songs is perhaps not surpassed for genuine pathos by any verse in the language.

(Ae fond kiss.)

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweall, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.
Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring signs and groans I'll wage thee.

The following ode is an exemplification of Hogg's remark, that, whenever the beauties of scenery had any attraction for him, it was only because they recalled to his recollection the image of some departed happiness; though the fidelity to the memory of his last love which he promises at the end of this ode, and through the whole of that which follows it, soon yielded to some fresh attraction.

(Highland Mary.)

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The Castle of Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flower
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloomed the gay, green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom;
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angels' wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging oft to meet again,
We tore ourselves asunder;
But, oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early,
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary.

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft have kiss'd sae fondly;
And closed for aye the sparkling glance,
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust,
The heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

(To Mary in Heaven.)

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past,
Thy image at our last embrace;
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods thick'ning green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene.
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of wingèd day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care;
Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

It has been mentioned how great was the fascination which a memoir of the great champion of his country, 'Wallace wight,' exerted over his youthful mind. The hearing of an old air, known as 'Hey tuttie taitie,' reported to be that to which the Scottish army marched on to take up its ground on the eventful 25th of June, suggested the idea of composing words to it. And Alcæus himself never roused his countrymen to warlike enterprise in a more inspiriting strain.

(Bruce to his Men at Bannockburn.)

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour:
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

In the next ode he lays aside the character of the lover for that of the lovelorn maiden, anxious for the safety of her sailor lad on the sea; painting with great force and tenderness the danger to which those who go down to the sea in

ships, especially when increased by war, are exposed, and the fearful solicitude of those who sit at home waiting for news.

(On the Seas and Far Away.)

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad?
How can I the thought forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe?
Let me wander, let me rove,
Still my heart is with my love;
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are with him that's far away.
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are aye with him that's far away.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in this scorching sun
My sailor's thund'ring at his gun.
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate, do with me what you may,
Spare but him that's far away!
On the seas, etc.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar,
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that's far away.
On the seas, etc.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end,
Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may Heaven, with prosperous gales
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey,
My dear lad that's far away.
On the seas, etc.

But it would not be fair to Burns's memory to give no extracts from one of his longer poems, which gives expression to higher feelings than those of love, or even of patriotism. There is an artless beauty and solemnity in the picture of the humble devotions of the farmer and his household which shows that the poet himself felt the influence of such scenes, and inclines us the more to look with pity and leniency on the excesses which ruined the man, and which these stanzas show that he himself, in his better moments, must have both lamented and condemned.

(The Cotter's Saturday Night, stanza xi.)

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That yout the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
How 'twas a towmmoud auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And 'Let us worship God,' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name:
Or noble Elgin beets the heav'nward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priestlike father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie

Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the sacred volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Pow'r incens'd the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole,
But haply in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MOORE.

A.D. 1779–1852.

BURNS had hardly passed away before Ireland put in her claim also to lyrical honours. But no writers of the same class could well be more different than Burns and Moore: indeed, except that both were men of low birth, and that both devoted themselves to poetry of the same kind, it would be hard to find a point of resemblance between them. Thomas Moore, the son of a small grocer in Dublin, and a Roman Catholic, was born in 1780; and when, in 1793, the Irish Parliament passed a law to enable those who did not belong to the Church of England to be admitted as undergraduates to the University, his father availed himself of the privilege, and entered his boy as a student at Trinity College, where he picked up a fair acquaintance with the classical languages, which a certain readiness of quotation and hardihood of assumption caused to pass for far greater learning than it really was among those who knew still less. He early plunged into authorship, and having, probably through Grattan's influence with Fox, procured the patronage of the Prince of Wales, he, before he was twenty, published a translation of the Odes attributed to Anacreon. He had already crossed over to London with the view of reading for the bar; but he had not sufficient application for that most laborious of all professions. And as his poetry, joined with a talent and taste for music, led to his being taken notice of in fashionable circles, he, like Burns, elated at being thus raised out of his original sphere, fancied that his genius would open to him the door to fortune. It did for a moment seem to have done so; but the way in which the goddess favoured him led in the end to disaster. He

obtained an appointment at Bermuda: but he entrusted the performance of his duties to a deputy, who proved a rogue, and embezzled money which Moore eventually had to make good. He was necessarily forced to resign his office and to return to England, where a singular incident afforded ample subject for mirth to the wags of the day, and a year or two later to the satiric muse of his subsequent friend Byron. In 1802, assuming the name of Thomas Little, in allusion to his own diminutive stature, he had published a second volume of poems, some of which were generally looked on as breathing a tone of licentiousness more in keeping with the manners of the past than of the present century; and when, in 1806, he sent out a third volume, entitled 'Odes and Epistles,' for the most part relating to and founded on his experience of life on the other side of the Atlantic, Mr. Jeffrey made it the subject of a severe article in the 'Edinburgh Review,' of which he was editor, in which he not only attacked the new publication, but Little's poems also, inferring that the subjects, and the extreme warmth of colouring with which they were treated, were derived from the experience of the author himself: an imputation at which Moore took such offence that he challenged his critic to fight a duel. They met, when it was found that, though both the combatants were amply provided with powder to make a noise, both had equally forgotten the bullets. It was natural that such a blunder should cause amusement enough at the time, and it had nearly led the poet into another duel with a more formidable antagonist; for when, a year or two afterwards, Byron, in his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' made his onslaught, it may almost be said, on every one alive who had ever wielded a pen, it was hardly possible for him, in chastising the chief offender Jeffrey, to pass over so tempting a circumstance; and the reader's recollection of the trying moment

'When Little's leadless pistol met his eye'

was re-awakened, with all the additional piquancy which could be given it by the embodiment of the incident in the wittiest satire of recent times. Jeffrey took no notice of the gibe; but Moore, thinking himself, certainly without reason,

more particularly aimed at, penned another challenge; which he entrusted to a friend, who, however found no opportunity of delivering it till the intended foe had gone abroad, and before Byron returned to this country Moore's wrath had in some degree evaporated. The result was that, after one or two notes of mutual explanation, the two poets became fast friends; and Moore, who survived, eventually became the biographer of the very man whose life he had designed to attempt in a less friendly manner.

It was soon after the commencement of his acquaintance with Byron that he commenced the work to which he chiefly owes his fame. A musical publisher, who was himself a native of the Green Island, conceived the idea of forming a collection of the best original Irish melodies, with 'words containing, as frequently as possible, allusions to the manners and history of the country.'[1] Moore gladly undertook the task of adopting words to these airs, and in 1813 and 1814 the 'Irish Melodies' were published. Their success was instantaneous. Varied as was the character of the airs, some being martial and spirited, others soft and tender, some being lively and mirthful, others plaintive and touching, there was hardly one which the poet failed to match with verse admirably corresponding to the emotion excited by the music. As far as ear and taste went he himself was no unskilful musician: indeed it was perhaps chiefly as a singer of his own songs that his society had been for some years courted in the most fashionable circles of London; and his work now showed him to have a singular command of rhythm in every conceivable metre. He afterwards published a similar though smaller set of national airs of other countries, that is to say, words adapted to Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian, Swiss, Scotch, and even Indian melodies; and this volume is distinguished for the same extraordinary facility of versification that had made the 'Irish Melodies' remarkable, and for great ingenuity and fertility of fancy. But Moore's lyrics are devoid of the simplicity and feeling of Burns: there is a constant straining after effect, and very often a

[1] Moore's preface to the first and second numbers of the 'Irish Melodies.'

parade of scholarship and learning fatal to their effect. His subjects are chiefly, like those of Anacreon, the praises of love and wine; but occasionally there is an attempt at a loftier strain, and in one or two instances far from an unsuccessful one.

Of their merit as poems, and of the durability of the fame which these works procured him, there might be two opinions: of their popularity at the moment there could be but one; and that was proved in the most satisfactory manner to himself, when the great London publishing house of Longman and Co. agreed to give him 3,000*l.* for a poem which he undertook to write, but of which the very subject was as yet undecided. It was the largest sum that at that time had ever been given for a poem; though Byron afterwards made it a pretext for demanding a similar sum for a single canto of Childe Harold. In 1817 it came out, under the title of 'Lalla Rookh,' an Oriental romance, glittering with rich fancy and the poet's other more technical excellences, but destitute of the vigour of Byron, still more of the feeling of Scott, and whenever it attempted either, especially the latter, failing most conspicuously. It was, in truth, an error to lay the scene in a country of which the writer knew nothing but what he could gather from books, and that want of knowledge was of itself sufficient to deprive the poem of any appearance of naturalness. But at first readers were not disposed to be critical; the poem had in many parts a brilliancy which concealed its defects, and it rapidly went through many editions.

It was nearly the author's last attempt at serious poetry. After many years the investigation into his Bermuda accounts resulted in proving him liable to make good to the Government the heavy loss which had been sustained through the defalcations of his deputy; and, in dread of being arrested for this and other debts, he quitted the country and withdrew to the Continent, making Paris his principal residence, and employing the period of his enforced residence abroad in the composition of burlesque poems: 'Rhymes on the Road,' 'The Fudge Family in Paris,' and 'Fables for the Holy Alliance,' satires of great liveliness and wit. Indeed, writings such as these were the

kind of composition for which he was best qualified by nature; for his merriment was unaffected, and his wit genuine. And the degree in which they took the public fancy was shown by the editor of the 'Times' engaging him at a salary of 500*l* a year to write political squibs for that newspaper.

But, as years went on, he apparently began to feel that his poetical vein was exhausted. He had written one poem since 'Lalla Rookh,' 'The Loves of the Angels,' but it was not greatly admired; and, as he could not afford to be idle, he began to turn his attention to cultivating his talent for prose writing. He had at different times published one or two trifling prose works, which had shown that his wit and liveliness did not depend on his skill as a versifier. But he now undertook works of a more serious cast. His first was his best, a 'Life of Sheridan,' which afforded him an opportunity of discussing the chief political questions of the day, and, in so doing, of setting forth the views of the party to which he had attached himself, the Whigs, which he certainly did with great clearness. It was followed by a 'Life of Byron,' for which his long intimacy with the great poet gave him peculiar facilities; and the judgment with which, as far as possible, he allowed Byron to tell his own story, by the insertion of a great portion of his correspondence, made it one of the most interesting books of the kind in the language. His prose style, though not particularly vigorous, is not inelegant; the chief fault of the two memoirs, especially of the last, being that the biographer thinks too much of himself: there is too much of the advice and suggestions which he himself gave, of his friends' appreciation of his talents and adoption of his counsels. His other prose works were a novel called 'The Epicurean,' a 'Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald' (the young nobleman who, having married a daughter of the infamous Duke of Orleans, had become so infected with the principles of the French revolutionists that he laid aside his title, headed a rebellion in Ireland, and was fortunate enough, by dying of his wounds, to escape the ignominy of a public execution), and a 'History of Ireland,' which was an undertaking rather beyond his powers.

The history of his latter years is a melancholy one. The accession of the Whigs to office placed him in comparatively easy circumstances, as Lord Melbourne conferred a large pension upon him; but his faculties began to decay: he lost his memory, and gradually fell into a state of complete imbecility, from which he was only released by death, in 1852.

As a poet, if in genius inferior to some of his great contemporaries, in the perfect mastery of the mechanical portions of his art, in melodious versification and the command of every kind of metre and rhythm, he is unsurpassed if not unrivalled: as also in the taste with which in his great work, the 'Irish Melodies,' he so faithfully represented the feeling of the music by his stanzas that the air seemed, as it always should seem, to have been composed to suit the words; and it was hard to suppose that in reality the air had been the mistress and had suggested the poetry. But before we proceed to examine them, we may devote a few minutes to a more ambitious ode, which he called a 'Melologue upon National Music,' and which, as having been composed with the express purpose of doing deserved honour to the power of music, may in some degree be compared with the Odes on St. Cecilia's Day of the great masters Dryden and Pope.

(Melologue upon National Music.)

There breathes a language known and felt
  Far as the pure air spreads its living zone;
Wherever rage can rouse, or pity melt,
  That language of the soul is felt and known.
    From those meridian plains
  Where oft of old, on some high tow'r,
The soft Peruvian pour'd his midnight strains,
And call'd his distant love with such sweet pow'r,
  That, when she heard the lonely lay,
Not worlds could keep her from his arms away;
    To the bleak climes of polar night,
    Where blithe, beneath a sunless sky,
The Lapland lover bids his reindeer fly,
And sings along the length'ning waste of snow,
    Gaily as if the blessed light
  Of vernal Phœbus burn'd upon his brow;

O Music! thy celestial claim
Is still resistless, still the same;
And faithful as the mighty sea
To the pale star that o'er its realms presides,
The spell-bound tides
Of human passion rise and fall for thee?

[*Greek Air.*

List! 'tis a Grecian maid that sings,
While from Ilissus' silv'ry springs,
She draws the cool lymph in her graceful urn;
And by her side, in Music's charm dissolving,
Some patriot youth, the glorious past revolving,
Dreams of bright days that never can return,
When Athens nursed her olive bough,
With hands by tyrant pow'r unchain'd;
And braided for the Muse's brow
A wreath by tyrant touch unstain'd.
When heroes trod each classic field,
Where coward feet now faintly falter;
When ev'ry arm was freedom's shield,
And ev'ry heart was freedom's altar!

[*Flourish of Trumpets.*

Hark! 'tis the sound that charms
The war-steed's wak'ning ears!
Oh! many a mother folds her arms,
Round her boy-soldier when that call she hears;
And, though her fond heart sink with fears,
Is proud to feel his young pulse bound
With valour's fever at the sound.
See, from his native hills afar
The rude Helvetian flies to war:
Careless for what, for whom he fights,
For slave or despot, wrongs or rights,
A conqueror oft—a hero never—
Yet lavish of his life-blood still,
As if 'twere like his mountain rill,
And gushed for ever!
Yes, Music, here, even here,
Amid this thoughtless, vague career,
Thy soul-felt charm asserts its wondrous pow'r—
There's a wild air which oft, among the rocks
Of his own lovèd land, at ev'ning hour,
Is heard, when shepherds homeward pipe their flocks,

Whose every note has power to thrill his mind
With tenderest thoughts; to bring around his knees
The rosy children whom he left behind,
And fill each little angel eye
With speaking tears, that ask him why
He wander'd from his hut for scenes like these?
Vain, vain is then the trumpet's brazen roar,
Sweet notes of home, of love, are all he hears,
And the stern eyes, that look'd for blood before,
Now melting, mournful, lose themselves in tears.

[*Swiss Air:* 'Ranz des Vaches.'

But, wake the trumpet's blast again,
And rouse the ranks of warrior men!
Oh, War! when Truth thy arm employs;
And Freedom's spirit guides the labouring storm,
'Tis then thy vengeance takes a hallow'd form,
And like Heaven's lightning sacredly destroys.
Nor, Music, through thy breathing sphere,
Lives there a sound more grateful to the ear
Of Him who made all harmony,
Than the blessed sound of fetters breaking,
And the first hymn that man, awaking
From slavery's slumber, breathes to liberty.

[*Spanish Chorus.*

Hark! from Spain, indignant Spain,
Bursts the bold, enthusiast strain,
Like morning's music on the air;
And seems, in every note, to swear
By Saragossa's ruined streets,
By brave Gerona's dreadful story,
That, while one Spaniard's life-blood beats,
That blood shall stain the conqueror's glory.

[*Spanish Air:* 'Ya Despeña.'

But ah! if vain the patriot's zeal,
If neither valour's force, nor wisdom's light
Can break or melt that blood-cemented seal,
Which shuts so close the book of Europe's right—
What song shall then in sadness tell
Of broken pride, of prospects shaded,
Of buried hopes, remember'd well,
Of ardour quench'd, and honour faded!

What Muse shall mourn the breathless brave,
In sweetest dirge at Memory's shrine?
What harp shall sigh o'er Freedom's grave?
O Erin, thine!

The following was reckoned by Moore's biographer, Lord John Russell, the most successful of his light songs. It is certainly eminently lively and tuneful, but as surely open to the charge of a pedantic parade of learning in the allusion to Ammon's Fount, which, he himself considered, required a note to explain it.

(Fly not yet.)

Fly not yet, 'tis just the hour,
When pleasure, like the midnight flower
That scorns the eye of vulgar light,
Begins to bloom for sons of night,
And maids who love the moon.

'Twas but to bless these hours of shade
That beauty and the moon were made,
'Tis then their soft attractions glowing,
Set the tides and goblets flowing.
Oh, stay! oh, stay!
Joy so seldom weaves a chain
Like this to-night, that, oh! 'tis pain
To break its links so soon.

Fly not yet, the fount that play'd
In times of old, through Ammon's[1] shade,
Though icy cold by day it ran,
Yet still, like souls of mirth, began,
To burn when night was near.
And thus should woman's heart and looks,
At noon be cold as winter brooks,
Nor kindle, till the night returning
Brings their genial hour for burning.
Oh, stay! oh, stay!
When did morning ever break,
And find such beaming eyes awake
As those that sparkle here.

The next is a still more general favourite, from the skill with which the sentiments of friendship and affection are connected with the feeling for the beauties of nature.

[1] Solis Fons, near the Temple of Ammon.

(The Meeting of the Waters.)

There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet;
Oh, the last rays of feeling and life must depart
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.

Yet it was not that Nature had shed o'er the scene
Her purest of crystal and brightest of green;
'Twas not her soft magic of streamlet or hill:
Oh, no! it was something more exquisite still.

'Twas that friends, the belov'd of my bosom, were near,
Who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear,
And who felt how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love.

Sweet vale of Avoca; how calm could I rest
In thy bosom of shade with the friends I love best,
Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease,
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace.

The next is one of the prettiest of his love-songs, because it derives its beauty not so much from imagery or grace of expression as from the depth and truth of the feeling to which it gives utterance.

(Believe me, if all those endearing young charms.)

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy gifts fading away,
Thou would'st still be ador'd, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart,
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofan'd by a tear,
That the fervour and faith of a soul can be known,
To which time will but make thee more dear;
No, the heart that has truly lov'd never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sun-flower turns on her god, when he sets
The same look which she turn'd when he rose.

The next is a song of great pathetic tenderness, and as such is an example of his clever versatility; for his natural disposition was far from being inclined to melancholy or to lamentation.

(She is far from the land.)

She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,
And lovers are round her, sighing:
But coldly she turns from their gaze, and weeps,
For her heart in his grave is lying.

She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains,
Every note which he lov'd awaking;
Ah! little they think who delight in her strains,
How the heart of the minstrel is breaking.

He had liv'd for his love, for his country he died,
They were all that to life had entwined him;
Nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,
Nor long will his love stay behind him.

Oh! make her a grave where the sunbeams rest,
When they promise a glorious morrow,
They'll shine o'er her sleep, like a smile from the West,
From her own lov'd island of sorrow.

The following ode is given more as a specimen of his perfect mastery over metre; that in which it is written being one which in less skilful hands would degenerate into what is commonly called singsong, but which as he uses it is tuneful and buoyant.

(Come o'er the Sea.)

Come o'er the sea
Maiden, with me,
Thine through sunshine, storm, and snows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same where'er it goes.
Let fate frown on, so we love and part not;
'Tis life where thou art, 'tis death where thou'rt not.
Then come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me,
Come wherever the wild wind blows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same, wherever it goes.

Was not the sea
Made for the free,
Land for courts and chains alone?
Here we are slaves,
But, on the waves,
Love and Liberty's all our own.
No eye to watch, and no tongue to wound us,
All earth forgot, and all heaven around us—
Then come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me,
Mine through sunshine, storm, and snows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same wherever it goes.

It is very rare for Moore to attempt a lofty strain: he was not made for war; and even the zeal which in his youth and early manhood he pretended for rebellion and rebels was far from genuine. The patrons of whose praises he was most proud were nobles and courtiers; and he gladly accepted first an appointment and then a pension from the Government. But the following very brief ode is admirable as incentive to gallant deeds. We need not enquire who the slaves are; but no one can doubt that a slave who can burst his own bonds is a recreant if he waits for some braver hand to give him the liberty which he can secure for himself. And there can be no greater incentive to warlike deeds than the sight of the foeman in front of the soldier, and the feeling that he has comrades by his side on whose courage and fidelity he can rely. There is energy and vigour in its very brevity.

(Where is the Slave.)

Oh, where's the slave so lowly,
Condemned to chains unholy,
Who could he burst
His bonds at first,
Would pine beneath them slowly?
What soul whose wrongs degrade it,
Would wait till time decay'd it,
When thus its wing
At once may spring
To the throne of Him who made it?
Farewell, Erin! farewell, all
Who live to weep our fall!

Less dear the laurel growing
Alive, untouch'd, and blowing,
Than that whose braid
Is pluck'd to shade
The brows with victory glowing.
We tread the land that bore us,
Her green flag glitters o'er us,
The friends we've tried
Are by our side,
And the foe we hate before us.
Farewell, Erin! farewell, all
Who live to weep our fall!

We have not given any high praise to 'Lalla Rookh' as a poem; but the song with which it concludes is perhaps not surpassed by any of his efforts, for truth and tenderness.

(Fly to the Desert.)

Fly to the desert, fly with me,
Our Arab tents are rude for thee;
But oh! the choice what heart can doubt,
Of tents with love, or thrones without?

Our rocks are rough, but smiling there,
The acacia waves her yellow air,
Lonely and sweet, nor lov'd the less,
For flow'ring in a wilderness.

Our sands are bare, but down their slope
The silv'ry-footed antelope
As gracefully and gaily springs
As o'er the marble court of kings.

Then come—thy Arab maid will be
The lov'd and lone acacia-tree,
The antelope whose feet shall bless
With their light sound thy loneliness.

Oh! there are looks and tones that dart
An instant's sunshine through the heart,—
As if the soul that minute caught
Some treasure it through life had sought.

As if the very lips and eyes,
Predestin'd to have all our sighs,
And never be forgot again,
Sparkled and spoke before us then!

So came thy ev'ry glance and tone
When first on me they breath'd and shone,
New, as if brought from other spheres,
Yet welcome as if lov'd for years.

Then fly with me—if thou hast known
No other flame, nor falsely thrown
A gem away that thou hadst sworn
Should ever in thy heart be worn.

Come, if the love thou hast for me
Is pure and fresh, as mine for thee—
Fresh as the fountain underground,
When first 'tis by the lapwing found.

But if for me thou dost forsake
Some other maid, and rudely break
Her worshipp'd image from its base,
To give to me the ruin'd place;

Then, fare thee well: I'd rather make
My bower upon some icy lake
When thawing suns begin to shine,
Than trust to love so false as thine!

In 1816 he published a set of sacred songs, of which one specimen is here subjoined; partly, though it is not without spirit, that it may be compared with an ode of Byron's on a kindred subject, the miraculous destruction of the host of Sennacherib.

(Sound the Loud Timbrel. Miriam's Song.)

['And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.'—Exodus xv. 20.]

Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed, his people are free.
Sing, for the pride of the tyrant is broken;
His chariots and horsemen, all splendid and brave,
How vain was their boast, for the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel, &c.

Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord,
His word was our arrow, his breath was our sword;
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath look'd out from his pillar of glory,
And all her brave thousands are dash'd in the tide.
Sound the loud timbrel, &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAMPBELL.

A.D. 1777–1844.

Among Moore's contemporaries and friends was a Scotch bard, whose fame chiefly depends on his odes, though they bear but a very small proportion to his more elaborate poems. To throw these last into the shade, as they have certainly done, is in itself a proof of the pre-eminent merit of the odes; for one of his longer poems, the 'Pleasures of Hope,' is distinguished by lively fancy and great melody of versification; nor, except Goldsmith, is there one of what may be called the school of Pope who reflects greater honour on their master. Thomas Campbell was born in Glasgow in 1777, and when he was twenty-six he removed to London, hoping (as he had already become popular by the celebrity of the 'Pleasures of Hope,' which was published in 1799, and was unanimously allowed to be the best poem that ever had been written by so young a man) to be able to support himself by his pen. He was not disappointed; but, though by different kinds of literary work he acquired a fair competence, no service which his Muse could do him could equal one which she had already rendered him. Like Wordsworth and his friends, he had become infected with the admiration for revolution which the inexperience of youth identified with liberty; and, while travelling in Germany, in 1800, his incautious language led to his being arrested as a Jacobin and a spy. In those days suspicion was often taken for proof, and the young poet was in great danger, when luckily the officers of justice, in searching his luggage, found in his trunk the noble ode on 'Ye Mariners of England.' The true British feeling which breathes through every line of it caused his acquittal. Though he lived nearly

half a century after this occurrence, he was not a voluminous poet. He wrote a few more odes, of great spirit and beauty, and a couple of longer poems, 'Gertrude of Wyoming' and 'Theodoric,' of unequal merit; but his most profitable undertakings were not spontaneous effusions of his Muse, but compilations suggested to him by booksellers, editions of former poets, magazine articles, and ephemeral writings of that kind. He died in 1844.

The following is the ode which did him such important service with the German magistrates. The honours which were paid in the same year to Nelson on his passing through Germany,[1] on his way from Naples to England, show how warmly the Germans, though an inland people, were inclined to appreciate the vast importance of the blows struck by our fleet in the cause of the liberty of Europe; and how easy therefore it must have been to convince them that one who shared their feelings on that subject so enthusiastically could not cherish dangerous views, nor be disposed to further the aims of French ambition.

Ye Mariners of England!
Who guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved, a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze!
Your glorious standard launch again,
To match another foe!
And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy tempests blow;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy tempests blow.

The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave,
For the deep it was their field of fame,
And ocean was their grave:
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy tempests blow;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy tempests blow.

[1] Southey's Nelson, ii. 88.

Britannia needs no bulwark,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak,
She quells the floods below,
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy tempests blow;
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy tempests blow.

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn;
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean-warriors!
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceas'd to blow;
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceas'd to blow.

A description of the battle of Hohenlinden, so fatal to the Austrians, and so glorious to Moreau and the French, did not of course afford the poet such opportunity for displaying his feelings of patriotism as the praise of what is pre-eminently the national force of Britain, her navy. But, as a spirit-stirring, martial ode, this has rarely, if ever, been surpassed.

On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow;
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight,
When the drum beat, at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast array'd,
Each horseman drew his battle-blade,
And furious every charger neigh'd,
To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills, with thunder riven;
Then rush'd the steed, to battle driven;
And, louder than the bolts of Heaven,
Far flash'd the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow
On Linden's hills of stainèd snow,
And bloodier yet the torrent flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

'Tis morn; but scarce yon level sun[1]
Can pierce the war-clouds, rolling dun,
Where furious Frank and fiery Hun
Shout in their sulph'rous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
Who rush to glory or the grave!
Wave, Munich, all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry!

Few, few shall part, where many meet!
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
And every turf beneath their feet
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

But a more imaginative and more sublime ode than either of the preceding is that in which the author conceives himself to be looking on the last of human beings, on one who has outlived all his fellows, and is awaiting the Day of Judgment in awful solitude.

(The Last Man).

All worldly shapes shall melt in gloom,
The Sun himself must die,
Before this mortal shall assume
His immortality:
I saw a vision in my sleep,
That gave my spirit strength to sweep
Adown the gulf of Time;
I saw the last of human mould,
That shall Creation's death behold,
As Adam saw her prime!

[1] The sun was level, the battle being fought almost at midwinter, Dec. 3, 1800.

The Sun's eye had a sickly glare,
The earth with age was wan;
The skeletons of nations were
Around that lonely man!
Some had expir'd in fight; the brands
Still rusted in their bony hands:
In plague and famine some!
Earth's cities had no sound nor tread,
And ships went drifting with the dead,
To shores where all was dumb!

Yet, prophet-like, that lone one stood,
With dauntless words and high,
That shook the sere leaves from the wood
As if a storm pass'd by.
Saying, We are twins in death, proud Sun;
Thy face is cold, thy race is run,
'Tis Mercy bids thee go;
For thou ten thousand thousand years
Hast seen the tide of human tears,
That shall no longer flow.

What though beneath thee man put forth
His pomp, his pride, his skill;
And arts that made fire, flood, and earth
The vassals of his will!
Yet mourn I not thy parted sway,
Thou dim, discrowned king of day;
For all those trophied arts
And triumphs that beneath thee sprang
Heal'd not a passion nor a pang
Entail'd on human hearts.

Go, let Oblivion's curtain fall
Upon the stage of men;
Nor with thy rising beams recall
Life's tragedy again;
Its piteous pageants bring not back,
Nor waken flesh upon the rack
Of pain anew to writhe;
Stretch'd in diseases' shapes abhorr'd,
Or mown in battle by the sword,
As grass beneath the scythe.

Ev'n I am weary in yon skies
To watch thy fading fire;
Test of all sumless agonies,
Behold not me expire.
My lips that speak thy dirge of death,
Their rounded gasp and gurgling breath
To see thou shalt not boast;
The eclipse of Nature spreads my pall,
The majesty of darkness shall
Receive my parting ghost.

This spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its heavenly spark,
Yet think not, Sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark.
No! it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By Him recall'd to breath
Who captive led captivity,
Who robb'd the grave of victory,
And took the sting from death!

Go, Sun, while Mercy holds me up,
On Nature's awful waste,
To drink this last and bitter cup
Of grief that man shall taste;
Go, tell the Night, that hides thy face,
Thou saws't the last of Adam's race
On Earth's sepulchral clod,
The dark'ning Universe defy
To quench his immortality,
Or shake his trust in God!

And that the pious feelings so powerfully expressed in the concluding stanzas of 'The Last Man' were habitual to Campbell is shown by his 'Ode to the Rainbow.'

Triumphal arch that fill'st the sky
When storms prepare to part,
I ask not proud Philosophy
To teach me what thou art.

Still seem, as to my childhood's sight,
A midway station given
For happy spirits to alight
Betwixt the earth and heaven.

Can all that optics teach unfold
Thy form to please me so,
As when I dreamt of gems and gold
Hid in thy radiant bow?

When Science from Creation's face
Enchantment's veil withdraws,
What lovely visions yield their place
To cold material laws.

And yet, fair bow, no fabling dreams,
But words of the Most High
Have told why first thy robe of beams
Was woven in the sky.

When o'er the green undeluged earth,
Heav'n's covenant thou didst shine,
How came the world's gray fathers forth
To watch thy sacred sign!

And when its yellow lustre smil'd
O'er mountains yet untrod,
Each mother held aloft her child,
To bless the bow of God.

Methinks, thy jubilee to keep,
The first-made anthem rang
On earth, delivered from the deep,
And the first poet sang.

Nor ever shall the Muse's eye,
Unraptur'd, greet thy beam;
Theme of primeval prophecy,
Be still the prophet's theme!

The earth to thee her incense yields,
The lark her welcome sings,
Where, glittering in the freshen'd fields,
The snowy mushroom springs.

How glorious is thy girdle cast
O'er mountain, tower, and town;
Or mirror'd in the ocean vast,
A thousand fathoms down.

As fresh in yon horizon dark,
As young thy beauties seem,
As when the eagle from the ark
First sported in thy beam.

For, faithful to its sacred page,
Heaven still rebuilds thy span,
Nor lets the type grow pale with age,
That first spoke peace to man.

Scott and Byron too have left us a few lyrics of high merit. Those of Scott which are subjoined are of very dissimilar character, one being a spirited lamentation over and denunciation of the atrocious massacre of Glencoe, the other, exquisite in its playfulness, the song put into the mouth of the 'wily lady' Heron, at the court of King James.

(The Massacre of Glencoe.)

'O tell me, Harper, wherefore flow
Thy wayward notes of wail and woe
Far down the desert of Glencoe,
Where none may list their melody?
Say, harp'st thou to the mists that fly,
Or to the dun deer glancing by,
Or to the eagle that from high
Screams chorus to thy minstrelsy.'

'No, not to these, for they have rest,—
The mist-wreath has the mountain-crest,
The stag his lair, the erne her nest,
Abode of lone security.
But those for whom I pour the lay,
Not wild-wood deep, nor mountain grey,
Not this deep dell that shrouds from day,
Could screen from treach'rous cruelty.

'Their flag was furl'd, and mute their drum,
The very household dogs were dumb,
Unwont to bay at guests that come
In guise of hospitality.
His blithest notes the piper plied,
Her gayest snood the maiden tied,
The dame her distaff flung aside,
To tend her kindly housewifery.

'The hand that mingled in the meal,
At midnight drew the felon steel,
And gave the host's kind breast to feel,
Meed for his hospitality!

The friendly hearth which warm'd that hand,
At midnight arm'd it with the brand,
That bade destruction's flames expand
Their red and fearful blazonry.

'Then woman's shriek was heard in vain,
Nor infancy's unpitied plain,
More than the warrior's groan, could gain
Respite from ruthless butchery!
The winter wind that whistled shrill,
The snows that night that choked the hill,
Though wild and pitiless, had still
Far more than southron clemency.

'Long have my harp's best notes been gone,
Few are its strings, and faint their tone,
They can but sound in desert lone
Their grey-haired master's misery;
Were each grey hair a minstrel string,
Each chord should imprecations fling,
Till startled Scotland loud should ring,
"Revenge for blood and treachery!"'

(Lochinvar.)

Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide border his steed was the best;
And save his good broad sword he weapon had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone,
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none,
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bridesmen, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word),
'O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?'

'I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide;
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine;
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.'

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
'Now tread we a measure,' said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, so lovely her face;
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume,
And the bride-maidens whispered, 'Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.'

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door where the charger stood near,
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
'She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran;
There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

The first of the following odes of Byron is given partly, as has already been mentioned, to enable the reader to contrast his powers with those of Moore, even in Moore's peculiar field of lyric poetry. It is contained in his 'Hebrew Melodies.' It is not only spirited in the highest degree, but exhibits also very brilliantly that same power of vivid painting of details which we have seen in his description of the battle of Talavera in 'Childe Harold.'

(The Destruction of Sennacherib.)

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breath'd in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail,
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

The ode which follows is not only admirable for its exquisite tenderness, but claims especial notice for the purity of devotional feeling which it breathes, but which is, unhappily, not very common in its author's writings.

(Stanzas for Music.)

Bright be the place of thy soul!
No lovelier spirit than thine
E'er burst from its mortal control,
In the orbs of the blessed to shine.
On earth thou wert all but divine,
As thy soul shall immortally be;
And our sorrow may cease to repine
When we know that thy God is with thee.

Light be the turf of thy tomb!
May its verdure like emeralds be!
There should not be the shadow of gloom
In aught that reminds us of thee.
Young flowers and an evergreen tree
May spring from the spot of thy rest:
But nor cypress nor yew let us see,
For why should we mourn for the blest?

The next, one of the noblest lyrics in the language, is doubly valuable, not only for its poetical vigour, but as embodying the poet's genuine feelings; of which he gave a convincing proof when, scarcely four years after it was written, he died in the land whose ancient glories he was now recalling, and which he was seeking by his own example to excite to emulation of the heroic patriotism of their ancestors.

(The Isles of Greece.)

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,—
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' 'Islands of the Blest.'

The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea,
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis,
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something in the dearth of fame,
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ!

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, 'Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!'
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

The tyrant of the Chersonese
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
Oh that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells:
In native swords and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But, gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

CHAPTER XXIX.

BURKE.

A.D. 1728–1797.

WE are now to speak of our orators, under which term I propose to include not only those who in Parliament have addressed themselves to the solution of problems of statesmanship, to the advocacy or disparagement of political measures or designs, but also those who from the pulpit have expounded truths less doubtful and of still greater importance to each individual hearer than the profoundest schemes of the ablest minister. In the former class I shall not go further back than Burke ; though he is far from having been the earliest speaker in our annals

> 'The applause of listening senates to command.'

On the contrary eloquence was a gift for which our statesmen had long been famous, and of which indeed, in the history of modern times, they had had the monopoly, since without freedom it can have no existence. It was born of and with our parliamentary institutions ; and of its triumphs our parliamentary traditions were full in every age. But just at the era which I have adopted as that which saw the commencement of our modern literature, the arbitrary interference of the Sovereign with the freedom of debate induced both the Houses of Parliament to prohibit the publication of speeches delivered within their walls. And though the fierce excitement of Charles's reign led to the rule being for a time disregarded, with the connivance and often with the assistance of the speakers themselves, both sides desiring, through their speeches, to appeal as it were to the nation at large against their adversaries, when the struggle was over its observance was again enforced, and

of the momentous discussions on matters of the deepest and most permanent interest which took place during the next century, we for the most part know nothing beyond the result. We know that the Exclusion Bill was defeated by a single speech of Halifax; the Peerage Bill by one from Walpole: while, far above all rivals of his own, or perhaps of any preceding age, towers the fame of Bolingbroke, brighter perhaps from the singular nature of the conditions under which he was permitted to return to his country,[1] which of themselves seemed to furnish irresistible proof of the reality and power of that eloquence to which the minister who had formerly experienced it, courageous as he was, feared again to expose himself. But beyond the fame of those great efforts of oratory nothing has come down to us; even of the speeches of the elder Pitt we have but scanty records, few and meagre fragments. And, of all the utterances of wisdom and patriotism with which the old walls of St. Stephens have resounded since the Long Parliament, Burke's are the earliest which have reached us with such a fulness and accuracy of report that we can feel sure that we have not only the general line of argument, but the very words and phrases of the speaker. Many of his speeches he himself corrected for the press: his example in this respect has been followed by many others on different occasions; and, even where it has not, the extreme skill and accuracy of the Parliamentary reporters, a class which, from the moment when the standing orders began to be relaxed, became of the highest importance, has left little to be desired.

Edmund Burke was born in Dublin, probably on the 12th of January 1728, though the date is not absolutely ascertained. His father was a solicitor in good practice, who, designing him for the higher branch of his own profession, as soon as he had taken his degree at Trinity College, removed him to London, and entered him as a student in the Middle Temple, with a view to his practising

[1] Walpole consented to annul that part of the act passed against him which prohibited his return to England and confiscated his estates; but could not be prevailed on to abrogate the clause which deprived him of his seat in the House of Lords.

in England, where the emoluments of a successful advocate were far higher than in his native country. Burke, however, like others whom the will of their parents rather than their own choice has destined for that laborious profession, was 'doomed his father's soul to cross' and, though he did not exactly 'pen a stanza when he should engross,' he soon abandoned the drier study of the law for the more flowery paths of general literature. His first efforts in this line were most remarkable. In an elaborate essay on the miseries arising to mankind from the principles of civil society and religion, he parodied the style of Bolingbroke, then lately dead, with such skill and success that Mallet was forced to publish a formal declaration that the work had not been written by Bolingbroke himself; and that, till it was avowed to be a parody, many believed it to be a deliberate adoption of the infidelity which in fact it ridiculed in the most effectual manner by pushing the infidel doctrines asserted by the pretended author to their legitimate and inevitable conclusion. Shortly afterwards, in a 'Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,' he set forth, with the most exquisite charms of style and language, a set of theories which, though generally exploded now, were universally admitted on their first assertion; so that Hume commended the treatise for its elegance, and Johnson pronounced it a model of philosophical criticism. Another work which it seems probable that he was the first to suggest, is continued to the present day, the 'Annual Register;' at all events he was for very many years its editor, and the author of its most important chapters, containing the History of Europe for the year. But, in spite of the praises bestowed on his writings by the most competent judges, he began to find that he had not acted prudently in abandoning the profession of the law for the still more uncertain career of a literary man; he had recently increased his expenses by marrying a Miss Nugent, a lady of great attractions and virtues, but of no fortune, the daughter of a physician at Bath; and, as compositions of the class to which he devoted himself were not of a sufficiently popular kind to be very profitable, he began to turn his thoughts in another direction, and, towards

the end of George II.'s reign, endeavoured to obtain the appointment of British Consul at Madrid; but, fortunately for his fame and for his country, he failed. His wish and his disappointment form a pendant to the very similar case of his great countryman the Duke of Wellington, who, in spite of the distinction he had achieved in the Dutch campaign of the Duke of York, was so disheartened by his military experience and prospects that he was anxious to exchange his commission for a situation in the Revenue Office.

The disappointment, however, was apparently compensated almost as soon as it was experienced, by a somewhat curious connection which he formed with Mr. Gerard Hamilton, commonly known in his own day as Single-speech Hamilton, from a very brilliant speech which he made in the debate on the address at the opening of the session of 1755. Hamilton, though possessed of many of the qualifications of an orator, was aware that he was but scantily endowed with historical or political knowledge. Burke's reputation as a writer on such subjects was already high, and Hamilton, having procured an introduction to him, induced him to accept a post which seems to have been something between that of his tutor and his secretary; and, when a short time afterwards he became Chief Secretary for Ireland, he procured Burke a pension of 300*l.* a year. The pension, which was on the Irish Treasury, was of course for life; but Hamilton, who was of an ungenerous temper, presumed so much on the obligation which he conceived he had laid Burke under by obtaining it for him, that after a few years Burke broke off all connection with him, and even, with a spirit which cannot be fully appreciated unless we recollect the narrowness of his private means, resigned the pension to him; and was once more thrown wholly on his own literary resources.

But brighter days were at hand. He had hardly broken with Hamilton when the death of his elder brother placed him in possession of an estate about equal in value to the pension which he had sacrificed; and when, in the summer of the same year, 1765, Lord Rockingham became Prime

Minister, that nobleman offered him an appointment as his private secretary, and, on his acceptance of it, procured him a seat in Parliament, as member for Wendover in Buckinghamshire, in which character he at once became the chief support of the new Cabinet in the Lower House, as neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Dowdeswell, nor the Secretary of State, General Conway, had the slightest pretensions to eloquence; and there has rarely been an occasion on which eloquence was more needed than it was by the new Administration. The tasks which, by accepting office, it undertook were of great importance and of great difficulty. They had to restore tranquillity and sobermindedness to the people, and respectability to the King's government, all of which had been seriously imperilled and disturbed by the culpable mismanagement of the late minister, George Grenville, and the illegality of the proceedings by which he had endeavoured to crush Wilkes. They had to pacify the well-grounded discontent of the North American colonies, caused by Grenville's impolitic attempts to tax them, and to revive their loyal attachment to the mother country, which, whatever measures they might propose for these ends, were sure to be opposed by Mr. Pitt, then at the very height of his reputation and influence both in the House of Commons and in the country; but who, though he professed to agree with Lord Rockingham in every principle of government, bore him bitter ill-will for having taken office when he himself had refused it, and who vented his malice and ill-temper on measures which, had he himself been minister, he would undoubtedly have proposed, cavilling at the details and proclaiming his distrust of the Cabinet, though it was not long since he had assured the King that Lord Rockingham was one of the best men of business in England. The whole weight of the contest with him fell upon Burke, who, in this first session, did not fear to measure himself with Pitt and Grenville, with all their reputation, and all their parliamentary and official experience, and who came victorious and triumphant from the conflict. The ministry however did not last long: the King, who had reluctantly given his consent to the repeal of the American Stamp

Act, was never very cordial or fair to the statesmen who insisted on it; and before they had been a year in office Mr. Pitt, who had been for some time intriguing to overthrow them, by the aid of the Chancellor, Lord Northington, who wanted an easier place, succeeded in his object, and once more composed an Administration of which he was the real though not the nominal chief, taking for himself the Privy Seal, with the Earldom of Chatham. He would gladly have availed himself of Burke's assistance; and Lord Rockingham, too generous to allow his indignation at Pitt's treacherous conduct to himself to interfere with the interests of his humble friend, wished to persuade him to take office in the new ministry; but Burke resented for him what the marquis was too magnanimous to resent for himself, refused Pitt's offers, and when, after a few months, Lord Chatham fell into a state of health that eventually compelled his resignation; and when his colleagues, emancipated from his control, presently returned to the worst of Grenville's measures, and reimposed taxes on the colonies, Burke led the opposition to them, speaking against them in the House of Commons, drawing up the protests which his party in the House of Lords from time to time entered against the ministerial policy, and enlightening the public out of doors by a series of pamphlets which resemble no other writings of the same class either in their character or their fate. They not only served their purpose at the time, but they are so deeply founded on the soundest political wisdom, they base their argument so largely on principles of universal application, that they are eagerly read even at the present day: so great indeed is their fame even now, a century after their first publication, that a French writer, very conversant with our political history, M. de Remusat, declares that, though 'Burke's reputation has risen greatly in England of late years, it is merely a literary reputation.' M. de Remusat is indeed mistaken on this point, being misled probably by the circumstances of Burke never having held office as a Cabinet minister: but that anyone able to appreciate the power of his speeches on the affairs of America should place his written eloquence on an equal level with them may at least

be taken as a strong evidence of the extraordinary excellence and effectiveness of these pamphlets.

Shortly after Lord North became the head of the Government, Burke had bound himself formally to support the claims of the Americans to the relief which they asked by accepting the post of Agent to the State of New York, which was admitted to be not incompatible with his position as a member of the Imperial Parliament. Similar appointments have been held by members within the memory of the present generation; but, in spite of the precedent thus set by Burke, the propriety of accepting such seems very questionable. It is quite true that his advocacy of the interests of the colonists was not the consequence of his being their salaried agent; that, on the contrary, it was the energy with which, on constitutional principles and those of political wisdom, he had put himself forward as their champion, which had induced the colonists to confide so important a cause to his continued advocacy. But such an appointment, if it does not destroy a member's independence, must inevitably cast suspicion on it, and in that way must diminish the effect of the very efforts which his employers are anxious to see him exert. At a later period Burke himself, arguing on the soundest principles of our parliamentary constitution, denounced the doctrine that a member was, or ought to be, the delegate of his constituents; but it is plain that one who becomes a paid agent of a colony puts himself in a still more objectionable position: he becomes the delegate of a body who are not his constituents; and, however unconsciously, he must be in some degree fettered and constrained by so unnatural a connection.

But either the injudiciousness of his taking such a step was not seen, or it was pardoned in consideration of the extreme brilliancy of the efforts by which he carried out its objects and justified it. And it was so far from diminishing his influence either in or out of the House that Bristol, at that time the second city in the kingdom, invited him to become its representative, and he gladly accepted the invitation, which was not only a well-deserved recognition of his abilities and services, but was also calculated to give additional weight to his arguments. The favour of his new

constituents he subsequently lost, under circumstances still more honorable to himself than those under which he now received this token of it. He refused at their dictation to withdraw his support from the measures by which Wilberforce was seeking to mitigate the miseries of the Africans, who were kidnapped by slave-dealers in their own country, and sold to the West Indian planters; and, as the Bristol merchants were largely interested in the West Indian trade, they disregarded every consideration of justice or humanity when put in competition with their own profits, insisted on their representative being equally barbarous and selfish, and discarded him because he maintained that their election of him as their representative was never intended to fetter him in the free exercise of his independent judgment; that a member of the British Parliament was bound to consult the welfare of the whole empire, not the fancied prosperity of a single constituency; and that those interests, properly understood, were inseparable from the still higher duties which all owed to humanity and religion.

It was, however, to no purpose that he exerted himself, first to prevent, and subsequently to terminate our quarrel with the colonies, and to preserve their allegiance to Britain. The King, whose consciousness of honesty and rectitude of intention was too often combined with, and was indeed in some sort the parent of an unyielding obstinacy which he mistook for firmness, was unalterably resolved to persevere in upholding the omnipotence of the Imperial Parliament by the taxation of America; and Lord North, sadly mistaking his duty as the King's minister, lent his aid to carry out a policy of which, if he did not in his heart from the first disapprove, he at all events soon recognised the impracticability. The result was that in the end we lost our American colonies; and Burke's great exertions, which were profitless to his country, which disregarded his advice, were productive of nothing but the small triumph to himself of becoming a subordinate member of the ministry which, on Lord North's resignation, Lord Rockingham once more formed to terminate the war with America, as his first administration had for the time averted it. It has always been regarded as strange, and not altogether credit-

able to Lord Rockingham that he could find no higher post than that of Paymaster to the Forces for a statesman who for fifteen years had been universally acknowledged as the great ornament and strength of his party. But in the distribution of offices, a minister is often forced to allow other considerations besides merit to guide his choice; and the place allotted to Burke afforded him an opportunity of displaying his disinterestedness and superiority to sordid gain in a way that could not have been derived from other posts of greater official importance. In a time of war enormous balances were constantly in the hands of the Paymaster, the interest on which had always been considered his legitimate perquisite. But Burke, the moment that he entered on his new duties, transferred the whole sum, amounting to nearly a million of money, to the public account in the Bank of England, thus voluntarily surrendering profits which had been enjoyed without blame by nearly all his predecessors, and which probably exceeded tenfold the salary to which he was entitled. The ministry was not allowed to complete the main object of its formation, the peace with America; since, before the negotiations on that subject could be concluded, Lord Rockingham died. But it laid the foundation for such a treaty, by a frank acknowledgment of the independence of the United States; and it carried a measure to which Burke had devoted his principal attention for some years, the Bill for Economical Reform; which, though its framer was forced to confine it within narrower limits than he had at first proposed to himself, effected an important annual saving to the country; and is especially worthy of remark as a proof of the great variety of Burke's abilities, showing, as it did, that the mind which could embrace and lay down the largest and most comprehensive maxims of general wisdom and policy was equally capable of grappling with and unravelling the minutest details.

On Lord Rockingham's death, Burke retired from office. Though the man of by far the most powerful intellect and most extensive acquirements in the whole party, he had some years before resigned the lead of it to Charles Fox, the second son of the first Lord Holland, who had also, though younger, displayed great abilities as a speaker,

had acquired a weight in the House inferior to none but that of Burke himself, and who must be admitted to have been in more respects than one (by his greater knowledge of the world, by his more accommodating disposition, and by his indescribable charms of manner and temper) better calculated to act as head of a party in Parliament. The King selected Lord Shelburne as Lord Rockingham's successor, and Fox, who had some reason for distrusting that nobleman, though no pretence for dictating, as he endeavoured to dictate, to his sovereign in whom he should confide, at once refused to serve under Lord Shelburne, and prevailed on Burke to follow his example, though the principles of Lord Shelburne's ministry differed in no respect from those avowed by Lord Rockingham. It was a grave error. It was a graver fault still when Burke followed the same leader in his unprincipled coalition with Lord North, and at the beginning of the next year, 1783, resumed his former office, again becoming, though even now not admitted into the Cabinet, one of the most important members of the Government, since the India Bill, on which it staked its existence, was chiefly of his framing. As is well known, the bill proved fatal to its authors; but, though the objections which were urged against it were undoubtedly well-founded, it must be admitted that in many respects, in the comprehensiveness of its details, and the largeness of the general principles on which it was founded, it was well worthy of his reputation; while the points objected to, the vast patronage which it conferred on the Minister, and the hopes which the exertion of that patronage held out of rendering his hold on office firm and lasting, however calculated to recommend it to Fox himself, were exactly those which a mind like that of Burke was likely to have passed over with indifference.

Out of the India Bill, and the investigations which Burke, in his preparation of it, was led to make into every part of our Indian administration, grew one of the transactions with which the fame of Burke in his later years is most inseparably connected, the impeachment of Warren Hastings. His conduct with respect to that great man is a striking

instance of the weakest point in his character, the comparative inability to see two sides of a question. Nor in assailing the great Governor-General as he did was he altogether consistent. Some years before, when the enemies whom Clive had raised up by the vigour of his reforms, had invoked the vengeance of Parliament on the head of that illustrious founder of our Indian Empire, Burke had taken a statesmanlike view of the whole question: without disguising the impropriety of some of Clive's actions he had weighed against them his far greater services, and had voted in his favour in the division which stamped his career with the approbation of his country. The services of Hastings were not inferior to Clive's; but one or two of his acts, which could not be denied to have been unjust and oppressive, his treatment of the Begums, and the assistance he had given to the enemies of the Rohillas, had made a deep impression on Burke's imagination; he was irritated too at the taunting language used towards himself by a Major Scott, a very injudicious champion of the Governor-General; and, under the influence of these feelings, he not only induced the House of Commons to impeach Hastings, but he pursued him, the mightiest genius to whom any European sovereign has ever committed the government of distant dominions, with a bitterness which had all the appearance of personal rancour, carrying his hostility so far that, even when it was notorious that Hastings was almost beggared by the expense of the trial, he exerted himself to the utmost to prevent his costs being defrayed by the Treasury, arguing, with a strange defiance of common sense (to say nothing of propriety of feeling), that the nation, by paying them, would be rewarding Hastings for what, in spite of his acquittal, he persisted in denouncing as undeniable crimes. That his efforts on the subject were distinguished by every kind of ability requisite to the very perfection of oratory, by a thorough knowledge of the subject, by lucid arrangement of details, by warmth and vigour of imagination, force and variety of expression, may be willingly admitted; but such an almost unequalled display of great gifts can only make us the more regret the field in which in this instance they were exercised.

The strange and fearful events which in his later years stained the annals and changed all the subsequent fortunes of France, brought Burke more prominently than ever before the world as an author, and also led to the disruption of the party of which he had long been the greatest ornament; though he maintained and indeed proved that he himself had in no respect changed the principles which he had avowed on his first entrance into public life, but that they who broke with him had abandoned them.

The French Revolution was indeed well calculated to unhinge all but the strongest minds, and to bewilder all but the most sagacious intellects. Burke for awhile stood almost alone in discerning its true character, and in 1790 he endeavoured to open the eyes of his countrymen to the evils which he foresaw, in an elaborate treatise, which he called 'Reflections on the French Revolution.' No work of the kind in our language has ever had so prodigious or so deserved a success. It is indeed rich in all the peculiar characteristics of his oratory, and, being so, was greeted with acclamation by the greater part of the educated classes in every country of Europe; though the prophetic sagacity which animated its pages could not be fully appreciated till years had passed by, and till it was seen how completely his forebodings had been realised. The only unfriendly critics were Fox and a small party of his admirers. Fox, on the first outbreak of the Revolution, had pronounced the most extravagant eulogies on it and its promoters, and now looked on the 'Reflections' as almost a personal reproof of his unreasoning panegyrics. A second pamphlet, under the title of 'A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly,' added fuel to his displeasure; and while he persevered in taking every opportunity to extol the Revolution, his partisans raised a continual uproar to prevent Burke from replying to his arguments. Burke's temper, never very patient, was at last irritated by the manifest unfairness of such treatment into publicly breaking off all connection with them, declaring that his firm adherence to the principles of the British constitution 'left him no alternative.' A year or two afterwards he justified his breach with them in a pamphlet as masterly as either of the others, 'An Appeal

from the New to the Old Whigs,' one which has even a greater permanent value, from the commentary which it contains on many important passages in our own history. And in 1794 a clear proof of the extent to which his doctrines were accepted by the 'Old Whigs' was afforded by their junction with the Minister, which was especially intended as a demonstration of their disapproval of the conduct of Fox's section of the party, the Duke of Portland himself, who had been selected by Fox as the head of the Coalition Ministry, now becoming Secretary of State under Mr. Pitt.

Burke's own exertions Pitt estimated so highly that, in the summer of 1794, he proposed to raise him to the Peerage; but after the offer had been thankfully accepted, Burke's son, his only child, for whose sake, as he himself was growing old, he would chiefly have valued it, died of an unusually rapid consumption; and the father, who had watched over his education with unceasing and judicious care, and had formed the highest opinion of his talents, and the fondest anticipations of his future eminence, retired broken-hearted to a small estate at Beaconsfield, which he had purchased a few years before, and declined now to accept an honour which had lost all value in his eyes, and which would have entailed a continuance of his exertions in Parliament, to which he had already ceased to feel equal. A month before his son's death he had retired from the House of Commons, in which he had latterly sat as member for Malton, and Richard Burke, who then seemed in the enjoyment of perfect health, had been returned in his stead. A pension he consented to accept; no pension had been better earned by a long period of most useful public service, and it was almost needed; for he was still a poor man, and had at all times been most liberal in aiding merit of any kind, and latterly in seeking to relieve the French emigrants, for whom his sympathies were keenly awakened. He had aided them too more usefully than with money. He had established a school for their education in his own neighbourhood, obtaining for it the sanction of the Government, and devoting to it not only comparatively large sums of money, but a great portion of his time.

Even in his retirement he did not wholly lay aside his interest in politics; he looked with as great horror as ever on the French Revolutionists, and when the Minister first evinced a willingness to negotiate with them for the cessation of hostilities, he showed his discontent by a series of letters whose object is sufficiently demonstrated by their title, 'Thoughts on a Regicide Peace.' But he scarcely ever left Beaconsfield; and there, on the 8th of July 1797, he died.

Parliament was sitting when the intelligence of his death reached London. To Fox's honour it must be recorded that the melancholy news at once banished from his heart all the bitterness that their rupture had formerly excited, and which the jealous animosity of some of his friends had kept alive, and reawakened in his heart the memory of their ancient friendship. He at once proposed that his departed friend should have a public funeral, to be celebrated with all possible honour, in Westminster Abbey. It would have been a fitting resting-place for one who had so long been one of the most brilliant ornaments of the great council in the adjacent palace; but Burke in his will had desired to be buried in his own parish church by the side of his son, and those to whom the arrangements were left considered such a grave the best suited to the simple dignity of his life and character.

In some respects Burke is the greatest of all orators: in amplitude and variety of knowledge; in extraordinary depth and largeness of view; in the penetrating sagacity with which he unveils the principles of human actions and the motives of individuals; and in the force with which, as a practical statesman, he applies his general principles to the question before him, it would be difficult to find his equal, impossible to name one superior to him. In the stating of a case, in narrative, his clearness is almost equally admirable. As an opponent of the arguments of others he was deficient in no weapon which makes an attack formidable. He was a perfect master of irony and sarcasm, withering in invective, lofty in his expression of disdain, and able to clothe his arguments at all times in a gorgeousness of language and style, and to illustrate them by a richness of

imagery, by a felicity of illustration, comparison, and quotation, which must ever continue to command the admiration of all who study them. But, if we are to judge of his eloquence by its effect upon its hearers, and, as speeches are meant to influence the feelings and judgments of men at the moment of their delivery, that is undoubtedly the truest test, we must admit him to have been inferior to Pitt and Grattan, if not also to Fox and Canning. He was often too philosophical for a mixed audience: he appealed too much to general principles which were beyond the appreciation of the majority. He dilated on them with a refinement too subtle for ordinary comprehension: Goldsmith's friendly mirthful description of him in 'Retaliation' is, like most of the portraits in that amusing poem, touched with shrewd discrimination:

> Too wise for his hearers, he went on refining,
> And thought of convincing when they thought of dining.

And thus it happened that in Parliament he had notoriously less weight than he deserved, or than was possessed by far inferior men. But his defects were those of taste and judgment, not of genius, and should not in the least diminish the earnestness with which the study of his speeches should be recommended as containing the richest specimens of almost every kind of excellence which prose composition is capable of exhibiting.

The speech from which the following passage is an extract is, as a whole, full of almost all those qualities which I have enumerated as most characteristic of his oratory. His description of Lord Chatham's Cabinet has been quoted over and over again, as a combination of truth and sarcasm which convulsed the whole House with laughter. His deduction from our past history of the principles which should guide the Government in the existing emergency, and which should at all times guide all Ministers who desire a permanent fame rather than a present popularity, is an example of statesmanlike wisdom enforced with equal power and felicity. The date of that speech, 1774, shows that it was delivered immediately after the receipt of the intelligence of the first tumults in America which broke out on the arrival of the tea-ships.

(Speech on American Taxation.)

Let us, sir, embrace some system or other before we end this session. Do you mean to tax America, and to draw a productive revenue from thence? If you do, speak out: name, fix, ascertain this revenue; settle its quantity; define its objects; provide for its collection; and then fight when you have something to fight for. If you murder, rob; if you kill, take possession; and do not appear in the character of madmen as well as assassins—violent, vindictive, bloody, and tyrannical, without an object. But may better counsels guide you!

Again, and again, revert to your old principles—seek peace and ensue it—leave America, if she has taxable matter in her, to tax herself. I am not here going into the distinctions of rights, nor attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions; I hate the very sound of them. Leave the Americans as they anciently stood, and these distinctions, born of our unhappy contest, will die along with it. They and we, and their and our ancestors, have been happy under that system. Let the memory of all actions in contradiction to that good old mode, on both sides, be extinguished for ever. Be content to bind America by laws of trade; you have always done it. Let this be your reason for binding their trade. Do not burthen them by taxes; you were not used to do so from the beginning. Let this be your reason for not taxing. These are the arguments of states and kingdoms. Leave the rest to the schools; for there only they may be discussed with safety. But if, intemperately, unwisely, fatally, you sophisticate and poison the very source of government, by urging subtle deductions, and consequences odious to those you govern, from the unlimited and illimitable nature of supreme sovereignty, you will teach them by these means to call that sovereignty itself in question. When you drive him hard, the boar will surely turn upon the hunters. If that sovereignty and their freedom cannot be reconciled, which will they take? They will cast your sovereignty in your face. Nobody will be argued into slavery. Sir, let the gentlemen on the other side call forth all their ability; let the best of them get up, and tell me what one character of liberty the Americans have, and what one brand of slavery they are free from, if they are bound in their property and industry by all the restraints you can imagine on commerce, and at the same time are made pack-horses of every tax you choose to impose, without the least share in granting them. When they bear the burthens of unlimited monopoly, will you bring them to bear the burthens of unlimited revenue too? The Englishman in America will feel that this is slavery—that it is legal slavery will be no compensation, either to his feelings or his understanding.

His eloquence produced no impression on the Government. The discontent of the Americans increased; and everyone of the slightest sagacity foresaw that civil war was imminent, unless it were avoided by timely concession. And under this conviction, at the beginning of the next year, Lord Chatham, in the House of Lords, brought in what he termed a Conciliatory Bill, which however was rejected; and a month afterwards, in March 1775, Burke proposed a series of resolutions, on which, if carried, he designed to found an enactment of the same character. His resolutions also were rejected by an immense majority; but no majority could invalidate the soundness of his arguments

(On Conciliation with America.)

As to the wealth which the colonies have drawn from the sea by their fisheries, you had all that matter fully opened at your bar. You surely thought those acquisitions of value, for they seemed even to excite your envy; and yet the spirit by which that enterprising employment has been exercised ought rather, in my opinion, to have raised your esteem and admiration. And pray, sir, what in the world is equal to it? Pass by the other parts, and look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the whale fishery. Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis' Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the Arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the Antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the south. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries; no climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this most perilous mode of hard industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people; a people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood. When I contemplate these things:

when I know that the colonies in general owe little or nothing to any care of ours, and that they are not squeezed into this happy form by the constraints of watchful and suspicious government, but that, through a wise and salutary neglect, a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection; when I reflect upon these effects, when I see how profitable they have been to us, I feel all the pride of power sink, and all presumption in the wisdom of human contrivances melt and die away within me. My rigour relents. I pardon something to the spirit of liberty.

He has been arguing the case hitherto with reference to the advantages which Britain had derived from the colonies: advantages not altogether an inadequate return for those which she had conferred on them. He proceeds to show what motives are likely to have the greatest influence on the Americans themselves.

I do not know that the colonies have, in any general way, or in any cool hour, gone much beyond the demand of immunity in relation to taxes. It is not fair to judge of the temper or dispositions of any man, or any set of men, when they are composed and at rest, from their conduct or their expressions in a state of disturbance and irritation. It is besides a very great mistake to imagine that mankind follow up practically any speculative principle, either of government or of freedom, as far as it will go in argument and logical illation. We Englishmen stop very short of the principles upon which we support any given part of our constitution, or even the whole of it together. I could easily, if I had not already tired you, give you very striking and convincing instances of it. This is nothing but what is natural and proper. All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter. We balance inconveniences; we give and take; we remit some rights that we may enjoy others; and we choose rather to be happy citizens than subtle disputants. As we must give away some natural liberty to enjoy civil advantages, so we must sacrifice some civil liberties for the advantages to be derived from the communion and fellowship of a great empire. But in all fair dealings the thing bought must bear some proportion to the purchase paid. None will barter away the immediate jewel of his soul. Though a great house is apt to make slaves haughty, yet it is purchasing a part of the artificial importance of a great empire too dear, to pay for it all essential rights, and all the intrinsic dignity of human

nature. None of us who would not risk his life rather than fall under a government purely arbitrary. But although there are some amongst us who think our constitution wants many improvements to make it a complete system of liberty, perhaps none who are of that opinion would think it right to aim at such improvement by disturbing his country, and risking everything that is dear to him. In every arduous enterprise we consider what we are to lose, as well as what we are to gain; and the more and better stake of liberty every people possess, the less they will hazard in a vain attempt to make it more. These are the cords of man. Man acts from adequate motives relative to his interests; and not on metaphysical speculations. Aristotle, the great master of reasoning, cautions us, and with great weight and propriety, against this species of delusive geometrical accuracy in moral arguments as the most fallacious of all sophistry.

But the most valuable and impressive part of the speech is that in which, from a consideration of the general principles of the British constitution, and the innate unchangeable spirit of the British race, he lays down the reciprocal duties of the governing mother-country to the governed colony.

For that service, for all service, whether of revenue, trade, or empire, my trust is in her interest in the British constitution. My hold of the colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron. Let the colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government,—they will cling and grapple to you; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. But let it be once understood that your government may be one thing, and their privileges another; that these two things may exist without any mutual relation; the cement is gone; the cohesion is loosened; and everything hastens to decay and dissolution. As long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom, they will turn their faces towards you. The more they multiply, the more friends you will have; the more ardently they love liberty, the more perfect will be their obedience. Slavery they can have anywhere. It is a weed that grows in every soil. They may have it from Spain, they may have it from Prussia. But until you become lost to all feeling of your true

interest and your natural dignity, freedom they can have from none but you. This is the commodity of price, of which you have the monopoly. This is the true act of navigation which binds to you the commerce of the colonies, and through them secures to you the wealth of the world. Deny them this participation of freedom, and you break that sole bond which originally made, and must still preserve, the unity of the empire. Do not entertain so weak an imagination as that your registers and your bonds, your affidavits and your sufferances, your cockets and your clearances, are what form the great securities of your commerce. Do not dream that your letters of office, and your instructions, and your suspending clauses are the things that hold together the great contexture of this mysterious whole. These things do not make your government. Dead instruments, passive tools as they are, it is the spirit of the English constitution, which, infused through the mighty mass, pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates, vivifies every part of the empire, even down to the minutest member.

Is it not the same virtue which does everything for us here in England. Do you imagine, then, that it is the Land Tax Act which raises your revenue? that it is the annual vote in the Committee of Supply which gives you your army? or that it is the Mutiny Bill which inspires it with bravery and discipline? No! surely, no! It is the love of the people; it is their attachment to their government, from the sense of the deep stake they have in such a glorious institution, which gives you your army and your navy, and infuses into both that liberal obedience without which your army would be a base rabble, and your navy nothing but rotten timber.

All this, I know well enough, will sound wild and chimerical to the profane herd of those vulgar and mechanical politicians who have no place among us; a sort of people who think that nothing exists but what is gross and material; and who, therefore, far from being qualified to be directors of the great movements of empire, are not fit to turn a wheel in the machine. But to men truly initiated and rightly taught, these ruling and master principles, which, in the opinion of such men as I have mentioned, have no substantial existence, are in truth everything and all in all. Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together. If we are conscious of our situation, and glow with zeal to fill our places as becomes our station and ourselves, we ought to anticipate all our public proceedings on America with the old warning of the Church, 'Sursum corda!' We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us. By

adverting to the dignity of this high calling, our ancestors have turned a savage wilderness into a glorious empire; and have made the most extensive and the only honourable conquests; not by destroying, but by promoting, the wealth, the number, the happiness of the human race. Let us get an American revenue as we have got an American empire. English privileges have made it all that it is; English privileges alone will make it all it can be.

Surely

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent.[1]

If the highest efforts of wisdom and genius combined could have saved a country from disaster, speeches like these might have been expected to lead those who heard them to insist on arresting the Ministers in their fatal policy. But no arguments could move Lord North or the phalanx which blindly followed his dictation. The colonies were lost, and Burke had no satisfaction but the consciousness of having in vain striven to avert the calamity.

It has been mentioned that Mr. Burke was first invited to become the representative of Bristol, and that after some years he was discarded for refusing to surrender his own judgment to that of his constituents. And this, his speech to the electors after his first return, seems almost as if it were dictated by an anticipation of the subsequent rupture. Laying down, as it does, the true constitutional principle of the relation between a constituency and its representative, it is especially worthy of attention at the present day, when there is such a disposition in many quarters to take that view of it which would convert a representative into a delegate, and against which Burke here so strongly protests.

(On being Elected for Bristol.)

Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him, their opinion high respect, their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions,

[1] 'If by a mortal hand my father's throne
Could be defended, 'twas by mine alone.'
Æn. ii. 387. DRYDEN's translation.

to theirs; and, above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

My worthy colleague says, his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion; in which one set of men deliberate, and another decide; and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments.

To deliver an opinion is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear; and which he ought always most seriously to consider. But, authoritative instructions, mandates issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgment and conscience, these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenour of our constitution.

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament. If the local constituent should have an interest, or should form a hasty opinion, evidently opposite to the real good of the rest of the community, the member for that place ought to be as far as any other from any endeavour to give it effect. I beg pardon for saying so much on this subject. I have been unwillingly drawn into it; but I shall ever use a respectful frankness of communication with you. Your faithful friend, your devoted servant, I shall be to the end of my life. A flatterer you do not wish for.

CHAPTER XXX.

WILLIAM PITT.

A.D. 1759–1806.

WE have seen that Burke added to his oratorical renown the fame of a great writer: he of whom I propose to speak in the present chapter was not only pre-eminent as a speaker, but had other qualities of a character at once more brilliant and more solid, and likewise of greater practical advantage to his country and to mankind, in such high perfection that the fame of his eloquence, high as it deservedly stands, is yet in some degree cast into the shade by the still grander qualities which he displayed as a Minister: by his genius for organisation, administration, and diplomacy; by his skill as a political economist; by his fertility of resource, his firmness amid difficulties and reverses, his large-minded liberality of view, and his clear perception of and resolute adherence, in public policy as well as in private life, to the maxims of humanity and religion as the leading principles of his statesmanship. His life is so identified with the history of his country that I shall not think it necessary to dwell on it with as much minuteness here as otherwise the dignity of his character and the importance of his career would seem to demand.

William Pitt, the second statesman who bore that name, was the second son of the [illegible], who, by his eloquence and a certain force of character which, in spite of great drawbacks, conducted most of his undertakings to success, raised himself from the rank of a 'cornet of horse' to the grand position of the chief Minister of the Crown, and to an earldom. He was born on the 28th of May, 1759, at Hayes in Kent, but he was a child of health so delicate that for some years his parents were far from sanguine about the pro-

spect of rearing him; and that they could not venture to send him to Eton, where his father had been educated; but kept him at home with a private tutor. According to the accounts which have come down to us, and which in his case are probably more to be believed than stories of precocity usually are, he was from very early boyhood remarkable for an extraordinary quickness and clearness of apprehension. But the first proof which he exhibited of his talents was one which, except in a single point, gave no indication of the field which he was hereafter to select for their exercise. By the time he was thirteen he had written a five-act tragedy in blank verse; which he, with his brothers and sisters, acted, to enliven some family festivities. It was a singular composition for a youth who, as a man, was certainly far enough from showing any poetical leanings; but in one point, as I have intimated, it was characteristic of his future career. As Lord Macaulay, who was allowed to read it, describes it, 'there was no love: the whole plot was political,' it even foreshadowed a very remarkable passage of his administration, since 'the interest, such as it is, turns on a contest about a regency; in which on one side was a faithful servant of the Crown, on the other an ambitious and unprincipled conspirator.' It is certainly a curious instance of unintentional prophecy to have been penned when Fox's voice had scarcely been heard within the walls of Parliament, and the author was hardly out of the nursery.

It was not in those days altogether unusual for boys to go to the University at a very early age; and Pitt was only fourteen when he was sent to Cambridge as an undergraduate of Pembroke College, where he continued to reside even after he had taken his degree; chiefly with the object of attending the University lectures on civil law, since his father destined him for the bar; and, as the death of Lord Chatham, which took place in May 1778, made no difference in his plans, in the autumn of that year, though not yet twenty years of age, he entered himself at Lincoln's Inn, varying his legal studies with a frequent attendance in either House of Parliament on the occasion of any important debate, in which, in one instance at least (but the

act recorded is too much in keeping with his subsequent career for us to doubt that the practice was habitual with him), he amused his companion, Fox (who, being several years older, looked on him as little more than a clever boy) by remarking, as the discussion proceeded, how each speech might be answered, and how the different speakers laid themselves open to refutation or retort.

He was called to the bar in June 1780, when he was only a few weeks more than twenty-one, and went the Western Circuit at the summer assizes; but the winter of the same year opened to him another path, his instant success in which speedily diverted his attention from the dry study of the law. When in September the Parliament was dissolved, he, relying probably on his father's reputation, ventured to offer himself as a candidate to represent the University, and, being defeated there, was elected, through the influence of Sir James Lowther, for Appleby, the county town of Westmoreland, and on the 23rd of January 1781, a day remarkable as that on which twenty-five years afterwards he died, he took his seat in the House of Commons. He at once attached himself to what may be called Lord Shelburne's section of the Opposition (the date shows that it was the last year of Lord North's ministry and of the American war), and in little more than a month made his maiden speech in support of Burke's Bill for Economical Reform, which, as it was entirely unpremeditated, being in fact a reply to the preceding speech, was recognised on all sides as one of almost unexampled promise, being eulogised as warmly by Lord North, to whose views it was opposed, as by Burke himself and Fox, who agreed with its sentiments; though if, as his biographer, Lord Stanhope, assures us, some of its admirers declared that 'the great Lord Chatham was now happily restored to his country,' a more infelicitous or inappropriate compliment could not well be imagined, since no two orators ever differed more widely in their habits of thought and style of expression than Lord Chatham and his son.

He became a frequent speaker, his subsequent efforts keeping up and increasing the impression which his first had made; so that, on Lord North's resignation in the

spring of 1782, the new Minister, Lord Rockingham, though scarcely acquainted with him personally, offered him the vice-treasurership of Ireland, a post of great emolument, and one which had been formerly held by his father. But, with what in so very young a man one can hardly avoid calling presumption, he had already made a public declaration in the House that he would never accept a subordinate office; and, in accordance with this avowal, he at once refused Lord Rockingham's offer. Perhaps his refusal was favorable to his subsequent rise. For the King had parted with Lord North so unwillingly that he was not inclined to look with much favour on those who succeeded him. The wags called the new Ministry 'the Regency, as governing instead of the King.'[1] And when, on the death of Lord Rockingham three months afterwards, Pitt was appointed to an office of the first importance, it was under circumstances which gave his acceptance in some degree the appearance of coming to the support of the King against an unreasonable attempt to dictate to him the mode of exercising his unquestionable prerogative.

The session of Parliament, however, did not pass without a very striking proof being given of the high estimation in which his oratorical powers were already held, by his being selected as their mouthpiece by a society which had been formed for the purpose of promoting a reform of Parliament, and of which one of the Cabinet, the Duke of Richmond, was a member. It was a subject on which Pitt himself held a strong opinion; which when he was himself at the head of affairs he more than once brought forward; and which he never abandoned till the revolutionary spirit, engendered by the fatal example of France, had infected so many minds in this country that he judged that all measures involving change in either the principles or the working of our own constitution must be laid aside till the agitation had subsided and the feelings of men had sobered down. As yet, however, public opinion was not ripe for such a measure; and, though the motion which he made was only for a select committee to enquire into the state of the

[1] Walpole. Letter dated April 22, 1782.

representation, he was defeated, as he was in all his subsequent efforts made with the same object.

On the death of Lord Rockingham, Lord Shelburne, who had been Secretary of State in his Cabinet, became First Lord of the Treasury; and Fox, Lord John Cavendish, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, with one or two others, Burke and Sheridan being among them, most unreasonably resigned their offices: most unreasonably and most improperly, because they could not pretend that Lord Shelburne's general policy or immediate objects differed in any point whatever from those of Lord Rockingham's; but Fox and Lord John took upon themselves, unasked, to recommend the Duke of Portland to the King as Prime Minister; and as the King, who had already appointed Lord Shelburne, and who knew him to be incomparably the abler man, naturally refused to submit to such arrogant and unprecedented dictation, they and their followers at once threw up their offices. Lord John's was offered to and accepted by Pitt, who had scarcely time to display his great financial abilities, but abundant opportunities for the exhibition of his powers of argument and oratory; for it was on him that the chief labour of defending the policy of the Government in the House of Commons principally fell. That it should have been necessary to defend it arose from one of the most discreditable transactions in our parliamentary history. Lord Rockingham, whose colleague Fox had been, had taken office expressly to terminate the war with America. Lord Shelburne had concluded the treaty on the very same terms to which Lord Rockingham and Fox, as Secretary of State, had been prepared to agree. But Fox was now exasperated at the disappointment of his plans of the preceding year; and though, for several years, he had denounced every part of Lord North's conduct towards America with the greatest vehemence and bitterness, he now combined with that statesman to drive Lord Shelburne from office, and to force themselves on the King as the chief members of the only Administration possible. In a succession of motions they denounced every part of the recent treaty, outvoted the Minister, by a small majority, in two divisions, and Lord Shelburne at once resigned, as

he was bound to do. But George III., at once shocked at the profligacy of the coalition by which his Minister had been defeated, and indignant at the resolution to force himself to a choice of which, on solid grounds, he disapproved, endeavoured to baulk the anticipations of profit from their victory with which Fox and North had flattered themselves, and, with the full concurrence of Lord Shelburne himself, offered his office to the young Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was wholly without precedent that so momentous a charge should be tendered to a young man of three-and-twenty. It was at least equally marvellous that one so young should be able so to subordinate his ambition to his sober-minded judgment as to refuse so great an honour. But he did refuse it, in spite of the strongest temptations to an opposite decision. On one side was the King, pressing the post on him with undisguised eagerness, and his own sincere feeling of loyalty to his royal master, whom, if he should decline, he was delivering over bound hand and foot, as it were, to the chiefs of an angry and insolent faction; there were on the same side the ardent persuasions of his late chief, Lord Shelburne himself, and of his ablest and most influential followers; there was also, there must have been, the secret promptings of his ever-honorable ambition, and of honorable ambition to serve his country no man ever felt more. But against all these inducements, strong as they were, he balanced, as coolly and impartially as if he himself had had no personal concern or interest in the matter, the amount of opposition which he should have to encounter, the probability of his being able to overcome it, the consequences of his defeat to himself and his party, and still more to the King; and, in spite of the most urgent remonstrances of his friends, he finally resolved to decline the tempting offer. That his refusal would compel the King to place the arrangements for the new Administration in the hands of the chiefs of the Coalition, he of course foresaw. But, though he regretted such a result, the more prolonged was his deliberation the more clear was his preception that, for the time, it could not be averted; and, though nearly a month elapsed before the King could be brought to accept and act upon his

decision, making many attempts to change it in the interval, he adhered to it with a steadfastness due to and consistent with the care with which he had formed it; and at last, in the first week of April, Lord North and Fox became the new Secretaries of State, the Duke of Portland, whom Fox had desired to force on the King in the preceding July, becoming the nominal Prime Minister. They would gladly have persuaded Pitt to retain his post of Chancellor of the Exchequer; but he disapproved entirely of every principle of the Coalition: he saw so plainly the shipwreck Fox was making of his own character by thus ignoring, and as it were revoking, all his former denunciations of Lord North's political principles and conduct, for the sake of office (for Lord North was clearly not so much to be blamed for accepting such a recantation on the part of his old enemy), that he wisely declined involving himself in so discreditable a connection, and persisted in his resignation of office.

The remainder of the session was comparatively uneventful, though not devoid of indications that the new allies and colleagues, Fox and North, would not long continue to act in harmony. But the next session, which opened in the second week of November, decided the fate of the Ministry with unexpected rapidity. They had employed the recess in forming a new constitution for our Indian Empire, which, in some of its clauses, seemed calculated rather to secure the permanence of the Administration, from the vast amount of patronage which it would place at the disposal of the existing ministers, than to consult the honour of the King or the advantage of the nation. George III. viewed it in this light, and his warmest admirers cannot honestly justify the means he took to defeat the scheme. Twenty years before he had been accused of countenancing the party who gave themselves the title of the King's friends, in opposing his ministers, whom, while they remained such, he was in honour bound to support; and on this occasion he notoriously authorised a relation of Pitt's, Earl Temple, to organise an underhand opposition in the House of Lords to his ministers' India Bill. Such an act was a clear violation of the relations which are supposed to exist, and which ought to exist, between the king and his cabinet; and even

success cannot excuse such a manœuvre. If it could it would be fully excused, for it succeeded beyond his warmest expectation. The bill was thrown out in the House of Lords: the King, without waiting for the resignation of the ministers, at once dismissed them, and renewed his offer of the Treasury to Pitt, who now without hesitation accepted it, and held it without interruption for nearly eighteen years.

From this time forth his personal history is identified with the history of the nation. It would be gratifying to dwell on the triumphant display of genius and moral courage with which for the next three months he maintained the contest against the most formidable and most unscrupulous band of antagonists that ever assailed a minister; and, after he was fully established in authority, on his sagacious and liberal policy, far in advance of his age, alike in the emancipation of commerce from restrictions, and in the repudiation of national animosities, which his rival Fox seemed rather inclined to cherish and revive when he opposed the commercial treaty with France, on the ground that that country 'was the natural foe of Great Britain, and by entering into such a treaty with us only wished to tie our hands, and prevent us from engaging in any alliance with other Powers.'[1] But we have no time for even the most cursory examination of his long and beneficent administration. Still in this place I may properly make one exception in favour of his Irish policy, and remind you of the efforts which in 1785 he made to set the trade of Ireland as free as that of England: efforts in which he was greatly impeded by the opposition of Fox, who was wont to avow, I had almost said to boast, of his ignorance of political economy; and in which he was eventually baffled by the wrongheadedness of the Irish House of Commons, and the influence of Fox's Irish partisans, who refused to co-operate with him to the extent on which he had a right to calculate. His object was, as he explained to the English Parliament, to 'adopt that system of trade with Ireland which would tend to enrich one part of the empire without impoverishing the other, while it would give strength

[1] Life of Pitt, i. 324.

to both.' And one would have supposed that such a design would have been even more acceptable to Irish than to English politicians, since undoubtedly Ireland stood in greater need than England of an expansion and augmentation of her resources; but the opposition of Grattan, who never showed himself to so little advantage, compelled him eventually to withdraw the bill by which he had hoped to effect his reforms: though they cannot deprive him of the praise which even Lord Macaulay is forced to admit to belong to him of being 'the first English Minister who formed great designs for the benefit of Ireland.'[1]

Indeed, it was to his success in carrying the Union with Ireland, the greatest measure of domestic administration ever accomplished by any statesman, and to his desire to complete it by placing all classes in both parts of the now United Kingdom on a footing of perfect equality, that he owed his temporary deprivation of office in 1801: an interruption of his official power which, taken in connection with the cause that led to it, is more creditable to his wisdom and integrity than the uninterrupted possession of it possibly could have been. It was not long before he was recalled to his post, by the unanimous feeling of the nation that he alone was capable of filling it; and in it he died, at the beginning of 1806, his constitution, which, as I mentioned before, had never been strong, being wholly worn out by the incessant fatigues of public life.

As I have said, I will not enter here into a discussion of his ministerial career further than to take notice of the criticism which Lord Macaulay passes on his talents as an administrator of war, when compared with those displayed by his father. It is true that the ally with whom Lord Chatham co-operated in the Seven Years' War did eventually triumph over the formidable confederacy which had combined to crush him; that our descents on the coast of France in the same war were almost uniformly successful; and that we conquered Canada. But it cannot be said that the British army at Hastenbech or at Minden contributed greatly to Frederick's success. Even amid the very enthusiasm which was created by his achievements, it was

[1] Life of Pitt, ii. 276.

questioned whether the petty warfare which kept the French in a state of alarm along the whole extent of their northern coasts was worthy of a great nation, or whether the damage which we inflicted was at all adequate to the vast expenditure which such enterprises involved, so that the elder Fox called it making windows with guineas; while the victory of Quebec and the acquisition of Canada were certainly owing more to the over-confidence of the French commander than to the skill of our own general, or the judgment of the Minister at home who employed him. On the other hand, it is a strange misrepresentation of facts to describe the warlike operations of England during Pitt's period of rule as uniformly and deservedly unsuccessful. It is true that the first campaigns against France in the Netherlands failed, partly indeed in consequence of the inexperience of the Duke of York (but the appointment of the commander did not rest with the department of the Prime Minister), and still more from the gross incompetency of Prince Coburg, the general of our ally. The difference between him and Frederick the Great is more than sufficient to account for the difference between the success of the side which we espoused in the Seven Years' War, and that which our efforts met with at the end of the century. Again, though it is equally true that the confederacy on which Pitt relied so confidently in 1805, was dissipated at Austerlitz, still the diplomatic skill which united Prussia and Austria against France was all his own; and he was in no degree responsible for the blunders of the Austrian Ministry and the Aulic Council, or the vacillation and treachery of Prussia, which ruined the alliance that he had formed with such care, and to which Napoleon's marvellous triumphs in that brief campaign are chiefly to be attributed. It may be added that on the sea, where alone England was unencumbered with allies, her triumphs were even more brilliant and decisive than those which Napoleon achieved on land.

As an orator, he, like Burke, is placed by all in the very first rank; but, while no two speakers could be more different in their style, the differences, as far as their influence on their hearers (the truest test of eloquence) was concerned, was decidedly in favour of Pitt. He had not indeed so

much oratorical genius, but he had far more judgment, and a far keener and more correct appreciation of the temper of the House. He had not the gorgeous fancy of Burke; he did not, perhaps he could not, indulge in such picturesque richness of imagery, simile, and metaphor: but he excelled him and all men in the closeness with which he kept himself and his audience to the contemplation of the subject before them; in the irresistible force of his logic; in the keenness of his sarcastic irony, and (a still more important point) in the lucid arrangement of details, even of the most complicated questions. If he did not indulge the same philosophical spirit in the laying down of large general principles, in which Burke excels all other speakers ancient or modern, that difference was no doubt caused in a great degree by the difference in their position. Nearly all Burke's greatest speeches were delivered by him as a member of the Opposition, criticising the measures of others; and, as those who wish to prove a negative must do, naturally therefore going over wider ground than the proposers or advocates of such measures; searching all the world, as it were, for arguments on which to found his objections. Pitt spoke almost always as the first Minister of the Crown, whose business in advocating his measures was to keep his hearers as closely as possible to the subject in hand, to prevent their attention from being diverted from it; and therefore he naturally dwelt, as a rule, more on the details of the one question before him than on general maxims of wisdom or policy or right, any mention of which might easily be used by a skilful antagonist to weaken his case by distracting the attention or intelligence of those by whose votes it was to be decided. Burke often spoke with vehemence, as a leader of Opposition was often called upon to speak; sometimes even with passion, as a leader of Opposition might, at times, be excused for speaking. Pitt, as first Minister of the Crown, would have had no excuse for yielding, I will not say he had never any temptation to yield, to transient impulses. He spoke necessarily with authority, as the ruler of the country. He spoke with uniform self-possession and dignity, which showed his consciousness of the duty to respect both his audience and himself which

that lofty position imposed upon him. We estimate him at some disadvantage since, by some accident, the speech which, both in his own opinion and in that of his antagonists, was the finest, the most spirit-stirring which he ever delivered, that on the renewal of the war in 1803, the speech of which Fox, in his reply, said 'the great orators of antiquity would have admired, probably would have envied it,' has been lost. But enough remains to prove how amply deserved were the very highest eulogies that have been passed upon his eloquence; while the very difference between his efforts and those of Burke, coupled with the admiration which then was and still is bestowed upon both, may serve to show that the British Parliament, in this respect as in others a true representative of the British nation, is insensible to no kind of talent, so long as it believes it to be inspired by patriotism and integrity.

The following passage closes one of his finest speeches, that on the Slave Trade. The argument drawn from the former condition of our own ancestors is not more irresistible than the language in which it is clothed is felicitous, rising into something of poetical richness as the speaker ventures to predict the blessings which he anticipates for the Africans when the abolition of the detestable Slave Trade shall have enabled Europeans to attempt their civilisation, and shall have given the natives confidence in the benevolence and purity of their motives.

I will not much longer fatigue the attention of the House; but this point has impressed itself so deeply on my mind, that I must trouble the committee with a few additional observations. Are we justified, I ask, on any one ground of theory, or by any one instance to be found in the history of the world, from its very beginning to this day, in forming the supposition which I am now combating? Are we justified in supposing that the particular practice which we encourage in Africa, of men's selling each other for slaves, is any symptom of a barbarism that is incurable? Are we justified in supposing that even the practice of offering up human sacrifices proves a total incapacity for civilisation? I believe it will be found, and perhaps much more generally than is supposed, that both the trade in slaves, and the still more savage custom of offering human sacrifices, obtained in former periods throughout many of those nations which now, by the

blessing of Providence, and by a long progression of improvement, are advanced the farthest in civilisation. I believe, sir, that, if we will reflect an instant, we shall find that this observation comes directly home to our own selves; and that, on the same ground on which we are now disposed to proscribe Africa for ever from all possibility of improvement, we ourselves might, in like manner, have been proscribed and for ever shut out from all the blessings which we now enjoy.

There was a time, sir, which it may be fit sometimes to revive in the remembrance of our countrymen, when even human sacrifices are said to have been offered in this island. But I would peculiarly observe on this day, for it is a case precisely in point, that the very practice of the slave trade once prevailed among us. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's 'History of Great Britain,' were formerly an established article of our exports. 'Great numbers,' he says, 'were exported, like cattle, from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed for sale in the Roman market.' It does not distinctly appear by what means they were procured; but there was unquestionably no small resemblance, in this particular point, between the case of our ancestors and that of the present wretched natives of Africa,—for the historian tells you that 'adultery, witchcraft, and debt were probably some of the chief sources of supplying the Roman market with British slaves—that prisoners taken in war were added to the number—and that there might be among them some unfortunate gamesters, who, after having lost all their goods, at length staked themselves, their wives, and children.' Every one of these sources of slavery has been stated, and almost precisely in the same terms, to be at this hour a source of slavery in Africa. And these circumstances, sir, with a solitary instance or two of human sacrifices, furnish the alleged proofs that Africa labours under a natural incapacity for civilisation; that it is enthusiasm and fanaticism to think that she can ever enjoy the knowledge and the morals of Europe; that Providence never intended her to rise above a state of barbarism; that Providence has irrevocably doomed her to be only a nursery for slaves for us free and civilised Europeans. Allow of this principle, as applied to Africa, and I should be glad to know why it might not also have been applied to ancient and uncivilised Britain. Why might not some Roman senator, reasoning on the principles of some honorable gentlemen, and pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, 'There is a people that will never rise to civilisation; there is a people destined never to be free—a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts—depressed by the hand of nature

below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world.' Might not this have been said, according to the principles which we now hear stated, in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa?

We, sir, have long since emerged from barbarism—we have almost forgotten that we were once barbarians—we are now raised to a situation which exhibits a striking contrast to every circumstance by which a Roman might have characterised us, and by which we now characterise Africa. There is indeed one thing wanting to complete the contrast, and to clear us altogether from the imputation of acting even to this hour as barbarians, for we continue to this hour a barbarous traffic in slaves; we continue it even yet in spite of all our great and undeniable pretensions to civilisation. We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans are at present. But, in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and, for a time, almost imperceptible, we have become rich in a variety of acquirements, favoured above measure in the gifts of Providence, unrivalled in commerce, pre-eminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the blessings of civil liberty; we are under the guidance of a mild and beneficent religion; and we are protected by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice: we are living under a system of government which our own happy experience leads us to pronounce the best and wisest which has ever yet been framed, a system which has become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings we must for ever have been shut out, had there been any truth in those principles which some gentlemen have not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa. Had those principles been true, we ourselves had languished to this hour in that miserable state of ignorance, brutality, and degradation in which history proves our ancestors to have been immersed. Had other nations adopted these principles in their conduct towards us; had other nations applied to Great Britain the reasoning which some of the senators of this very island now apply to Africa, ages might have passed without our emerging from barbarism; and we, who are enjoying the blessings of British civilisation, of British laws, and British liberty, might, at this hour, have been little superior, either in morals, in knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of the Coast of Guinea.

If, then, we feel that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we view with gratitude and exultation the contrast between the peculiar blessings we enjoy and the wretchedness of the ancient inhabitants of Britain; if we shudder to think of the misery which would still have overwhelmed us had Great Britain continued to the present times to be the mart for slaves to the more civilised nations of the world, through some cruel policy of theirs, God forbid that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and preclude the light of knowledge, which has reached every other quarter of the globe, from having access to her coasts!

I trust we shall no longer continue this commerce, to the destruction of every improvement on that wide continent; and shall not consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon in restoring its inhabitants to the rank of human beings. I trust we shall not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the slave trade, we give them the same common chance of civilisation with other parts of the world, and that we shall now allow to Africa the opportunity —the hope—the prospect of attaining to the same blessings which we ourselves, through the favourable dispensations of Divine Providence, have been permitted, at a much more early period, to enjoy. If we listen to the voice of reason and duty, and pursue this night the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the natives of Africa engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which, at some happy period in still later times, may blaze with full lustre; and, joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length, in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness (if kindness it can be called), of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled.

> Nosque ubi primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis;
> Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.

Then, sir, may be applied to Africa those words, originally used indeed with a different view:

> His demum exactis, * * * *
> Devenere locos lætos, et amœna vireta
> Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas:
> Largior hic campos æther, et lumini vestit
> Purpureo.

It is in this view, sir; it is as an atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa, that the measure proposed by my honourable friend most forcibly recommends itself to my mind. The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants is, of all the various and important benefits of the abolition, in my estimation, incomparably the most extensive and important.

The second extract is from his speech on the Union:

Sir, the next and not the least prevalent objection, is one which is contained in words which are an appeal to a natural and laudable, but what I must call an erroneous and mistaken sense of national pride. It is an appeal to the generous and noble passions of a nation easily inflamed under any supposed attack upon its honour, I mean the attempt to represent the question of an union by compact between the parliaments of the two kingdoms as a question involving the independence of Ireland. It has been said, that no compensation could be made to any country for the surrender of its national independence. Sir, on this, as well as on every part of the question, I am desirous gentlemen should come closely to the point, that they should sift it to the bottom, and ascertain upon what grounds and principles their opinion really rests. Do they mean to maintain that, in any humiliating, in any degrading sense of the word which can be acted upon practically as a rule, and which can lead to any useful conclusion, that at any time when the governments of any two separate countries unite in forming one more extensive empire, the individuals who composed either of the former narrow societies are afterwards less members of an independent country, or to any valuable and useful purpose less possessed of political freedom, of civil happiness, than they were before? It must be obvious to every gentleman who will look at the subject, in tracing the histories of all the countries the most proud of their present existing independence, of all the nations in Europe there is not one that could exist in the state in which it now stands if that principle had been acted upon by our forefathers; and Europe must have remained to this hour in a state of ignorance and barbarism, from the perpetual warfare

of independent and petty States. In the instance of our own country, it would be a superfluous waste of time to enumerate the steps by which all its parts were formed into one kingdom; but will any man in general assert that, in all the different unions which have formed the principal States of Europe, their inhabitants have become less free, that they have had less of which to be proud, less scope for their own exertions, than they had in their former situation. If this doctrine is to be generally maintained, what becomes of the situation at this hour of any one county of England, or of any one county of Ireland, now united under the independent parliament of that kingdom? If it be pushed to its full extent, it is obviously incompatible with all civil society. As the former principle of the sovereignty of the people strikes at the foundation of all governments, so this is equally hostile to all political confederacy, and mankind must be driven back to what is called the state of nature.

But while I combat this general and abstract principle, which would operate as an objection to every union between separate States, on the ground of the sacrifice of independence, do I mean to contend that there is in no case just ground for such a sentiment? Far from it; it may become, on many occasions, the first duty of a free and generous people. If there exists a country which contains within itself the means of military protection, the naval force necessary for its defence, which furnishes objects of industry sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants, and pecuniary resources adequate to maintaining with dignity the rank which it has attained among the nations of the world; if, above all, it enjoys the blessings of internal content and tranquillity, and possesses a distinct constitution of its own, the defects of which, if any, it is within itself capable of correcting; and if that constitution be equal, if not superior, to that of any other in the world, or (which is nearly the same thing) if those who live under it believe it to be so, and fondly cherish that opinion, I can indeed well understand that such a country must be jealous of any measure, which, even by its own consent, under the authority of its own lawful Government, is to associate it as a part of a larger and more extensive empire.

But, sir, if, on the other hand, it should happen that there be a country which, against the greatest of all dangers that threatens its peace and security, has not adequate means of protecting itself without the aid of another nation; if that other be a neighbouring and kindred nation, speaking the same language, whose laws, whose customs, and habits are the same in principle, but carried to a greater degree of perfection, with a more extensive commerce,

and more abundant means of acquiring and diffusing national wealth, the stability of whose government, the excellence of whose constitution, is more than ever the admiration and envy of Europe, and of which the very country of which we are speaking can only boast an inadequate and imperfect resemblance; under such circumstances, I would ask, what conduct would be prescribed by every rational principle of dignity, of honour, or of interest? I would ask, whether this is not a faithful description of the circumstances which ought to dispose Ireland to an union? whether Great Britain is not precisely the nation with which, on these principles, a country, situated as Ireland is, would desire to unite? Does an union, under such circumstances, by free consent, and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join, for their common benefit, in one empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connection to render both invincible?

> Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo,
> Nec nova regna peto; paribus se legibus ambæ
> Invictæ gentes æterna in fœdera mittant.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GRATTAN.

A.D. 1746–1820.

IT has been doubted who is the greatest orator that has ever adorned the English Parliament. It has never, I believe, been questioned for a moment that of those who, during the short time that it was a really independent and influential body, sat in the Irish Parliament, no one has approached the great man of whom I propose to speak in the present chapter.

Henry Grattan, the son of an eminent lawyer who was Recorder of Dublin for many years, and who, at one time, represented that city in the Irish House of Commons, was born in July 1746; and after completing his education at Trinity College, he, like Burke, was transferred to London, and entered as a student of the Middle Temple, with a view to practising at the English Bar. As of Pitt a few years later, so it is recorded of him, however, that he from the first devoted almost as much of his attention to the debates in Parliament as to the pleadings in Westminster Hall, the chief object of his admiration being the same as Pitt's, Lord Chatham, who had just exchanged his seat as a member of the House of Commons for the Privy Seal and a peerage, and, however much he may have impaired his popularity in the eyes of the mob, lost none of his influence over the mind of his Irish admirer by his promotion, which no spirit but that of the grossest faction could deny to have been well deserved. However, Grattan presently left London for a time: a family affliction, which affected him deeply, the loss of a favourite sister, made society for a while distasteful to him, and he quitted the metropolis for a cottage in Windsor Forest, where among the scenery which Pope had

celebrated in such mellifluous strains he began to endeavour to imitate him, and for some months gave himself up to poetical composition, though one would have fancied that no two men of genius differed more widely in the character of their minds than the careful, correct poet, and the impulsive enthusiastic young lawyer; and it is the conjecture of one of his biographers, that it was the difference between the tone of mind of him whom he had taken for his model and his own that made him abandon the cultivation of his poetical talents after a few months' trial. But other causes of greater potency soon led him to choose a more practical career. When he was two-and-twenty a great step was made towards the independence of the Irish Legislature by the passing of a bill to limit the duration of each parliament; for neither the Triennial nor the Septennial Act of Great Britain had been extended to Ireland. But in 1768 an Octennial Bill was passed for that country, and, in his periodical visits to Dublin, Grattan made acquaintance with Flood, a member of great abilities and eloquence, to whose great exertions and influence the enactment of the new law was principally attributed. His well-deserved popularity pointed out to Grattan that fame in the great council of his native land was more within the reach of his abilities, and more in harmony with their character, than the laurel wreath of the poet; and at the dissolution in 1775, when he was twenty-nine, he was returned by Lord Charlemont's influence for the borough of that name, and took his seat in the Irish House of Commons. He was not then long before he showed himself worthy to be Flood's coadjutor; nay, even still better calculated, by his oratorical ability, to command the assent of an impulsive, enthusiastic audience like the bulk of his parliamentary brethren. Flood, too, after a time, weakened his own influence by accepting a ministerial office when Lord Harcourt came to Dublin as Lord Lieutenant; affirming, with almost self-evident truth, that he could serve his country better as a member of the Government than of the Opposition; but there was so much jealousy of England prevailing in Ireland at the time (it must be confessed that it was not altogether unjustifiable or groundless) that many accused him of having deserted the cause of

Ireland; and gradually Grattan became the leader of what was emphatically called the Irish party. It was he who, in 1779, moved the amendment to the address which resulted in the passing a resolution in favour of free trade. It was he who, the next year, made his still more memorable motion that 'the King with the Lords and Commons of Ireland were the only power competent to make laws for Ireland': a resolution which struck directly at the maintenance of the old act of Henry VII., known as Poyning's Law, or the Statute of Drogheda, and confirmed by a subsequent act of George I., by which all bills except money bills, before they could be introduced into the Irish Parliament, were to be transmitted for examination to the Privy Council of England, which was invested with absolute power to alter or even altogether to suppress them. At first he did not altogether succeed; but he obtained an instalment of great practical advantage to his country: Lord North at once introduced bills to improve the commercial relations of Ireland with other countries, especially with England herself. And when, two years afterwards, Lord Rockingham became Prime Minister, his Cabinet granted the repeal of the obnoxious Poyning's Act, and the Irish Parliament for the first time became a really free deliberative and legislative Council. The repeal has been spoken of by Irish writers as the Revolution of 1782, and it deserves the name; for, in fact, it did make a total revolution in all that pertains to the dignity of the country. Till that time Ireland could hardly be said to be free, to have any share at all in the most essential privilege of freedom, the making of its own laws. And it was so generally acknowledged that it was to Grattan that the attainment of this inestimable advantage was owing, that the very first use which the Irish Parliament made of its liberty was to grant him a sum of 50,000*l.*, which they indeed had desired to make 100,000*l.*, and only reduced to half that sum in deference to his own earnest wish and request.

If Flood's installation in office had diminished his popularity with a certain class, it was almost inevitable that Grattan's acceptance of such a reward would raise him up enemies and detractors; though it might not have been

expected that Flood himself would have been of the number of those whom it led to distrust him. It, however, not only did so, but led to a most bitter and unseemly altercation between the two in the House of Commons; Flood reproaching Grattan as 'a mendicant patriot, subsisting on the public revenue,' and Grattan retaliating in so violent a denunciation of his antagonist's policy through life, and present integrity, and even of his personal appearance, that it was found necessary to arrest Flood and bind him over, to prevent these two men of the first ability in the land, and of the purest patriotism, from fighting in support of their mutual invectives. But Grattan soon recovered the greater part of his authority, though he did not always use it wisely. In the question of the Regency, in 1788, he was able to determine the Irish Parliament to adopt the view urged in the English House of Commons by Fox, that the Prince of Wales had as inalienable a right to the Regency, unfettered by conditions, as he would have had to the throne if his father had been dead. And, in defiance of a constant stream of precedents which ran, with a singular uniformity, the other way, he carried an address to the Prince, to request him, as of right, to take upon himself the Regency of Ireland: an address which was on the very point of being presented, when, fortunately, the King's recovery saved the kingdom from the inconvenient trial of having a Regent in one island holding his authority on grounds entirely different from those on which it was conferred on him in the other island.

Grattan was, however, no servile follower of Fox. An English statesman whose fame for conscientious integrity and honest zeal for all that was excellent and honorable has never been surpassed, Wilberforce, who knew him well after he became a member of the English Parliament, declared that he 'had never known any man whose patriotism and love for his country seemed more completely to extinguish all consideration of private interests in his heart, and to induce him to look invariably and exclusively to the public good;' and, under the influence of this feeling, he sided with his illustrious countryman Burke in his denunciations of the French Revolution, and, like him, sup-

ported Pitt in many of the measures by which the great minister sought to check both the foreign enemy and the growth of revolutionary feeling in these kingdoms. But he broke with him again, or rather with his Irish colleagues, disapproving and resisting to the utmost of his power the generality of the measures by which they sought first to quell, and afterwards to chastise, the rebellion of 1798. And two years afterwards he exerted all his genius and energy in opposition to the Union; though the vote of 1789 and the recent rebellion had certainly shown the indispensableness of such a measure; and though the example of the Scotch Union had surely demonstrated that, as might have been expected, though both kingdoms gained by drawing more closely the bonds which connected them, the greatest benefit must be reaped by the poorer country.

In the first united Parliament he had no seat; but in that which was elected in 1805, and for the next fifteen years, he took a prominent part in the debates, generally on the side of the Whigs, though, on the return of Napoleon from Elba in 1815, he once more gave proof of the justice of Wilberforce's eulogy, by a warm support of Lord Liverpool's Government on the question of the instant renewal of the war, before the ever-restless warrior, thus strangely reinstated on the French throne, should have time again to become formidable. He died at the beginning of 1820, full of honours. It was a Scotchman, not undistinguished as a scholar and a statesman,[1] who, in the united Parliament, being selected to move for a new writ for Dublin, pronounced the first eulogy on his career and character; but his praises were echoed by the leaders of all parties, in a way which proved him to have won the esteem of all parties and of each nation.

The first two passages which follow are extracted from the speeches which may be said to have made his fame: in the first he advocates the repeal of Poyning's Act; in the last he congratulates the Parliament and the country on that repeal. They are perhaps distinguished more by energy of declamation than by closeness of argument; but,

[1] Sir J. Mackintosh.

in fact, what was needed on that occasion was rather fire and spirit to move the feelings than reasoning to convince the understanding. For but little argumentation was requisite to prove that a Parliament which had no power to originate a single measure was but a phantom, not a reality; and that a people who had only such a Parliament to look up to was, for all practical purposes, in bondage.

(Declaration of Irish Rights.)

But though you do not hazard disturbance by agreeing to this resolution, you do most exceedingly hazard tranquillity by rejecting it. Do not imagine that the question will be over when this motion shall be negatived. No: it will recur in a vast variety of shapes and diversity of places. Your constituents have instructed you in great numbers, with a powerful uniformity of sentiment, and in a style not the less awful because full of respect. They will find resources in their own virtue, if they have found none in yours. Public pride and conscious liberty, wounded by repulse, will find ways and means of vindication. You are in that situation in which every man, every hour of the day, may shake the pillars of the State; every court may swarm with the question of right: every quay and wharf with prohibited goods: what shall the judges, what the commissioners, do upon this occasion? Shall they comply with the laws of Ireland, and against the claims of England, and stand firm where you have capitulated? Shall they, on the other hand, not comply, and shall they persist to act against the law? Will you punish them if they do so? Will you proceed against them for not showing a spirit superior to your own? On the other hand, will you not punish them? Will you leave liberty to be trampled on by those men? Will you bring them and yourselves, all constituted orders, executive power, judicial power, and parliamentary authority, into a state of odium, impotence, and contempt: transferring the task of defending public right into the hands of the populace, and leaving it to the judges to break the laws, and to the people to assert them? Such would be the consequence of false moderation, of irritating timidity, of inflammatory palliatives, of the weak and corrupt hope of compromising with the court, before you have emancipated the country.

I have answered the only semblance of a solid reason against the motion; I will remove some lesser pretences, some minor impediments; for instance, first, that we have a resolution of the same kind already on our journals, it will be said; but how often was the great charter confirmed? not more frequently than your

rights have been violated. Is one solitary resolution, declaratory of your right, sufficient for a country whose history, from the beginning to the end, has been a course of violation? The fact is, every new breach is a reason for a new repair; every new infringement should be a new declaration, lest charters should be overwhelmed with precedents to their prejudice, a nation's right obliterated, and the people themselves lose the memory of their own freedom.

I shall hear of ingratitude: I name the argument to despise it, and the men who make use of it: I know the men who use it are not grateful, they are insatiate: they are public extortioners, who would stop the tide of public prosperity, and turn it to the channel of their own emolument. I know of no species of gratitude which should prevent my country from being free, no gratitude which should oblige Ireland to be the slave of England. In cases of robbery and usurpation, nothing is an object of gratitude except the thing stolen, the charter spoliated. A nation's liberty cannot, like her treasures, be meted and parcelled out in gratitude; no man can be grateful or liberal of his conscience, nor woman of her honour, nor nation of her liberty: there are certain unimpartable, inherent, invaluable properties, not to be alienated from the person, whether body politic or body natural. With the same contempt do I treat that charge which says that Ireland is insatiable; saying, that Ireland asks nothing but that which Great Britain has robbed her of, her rights and privileges. To say that Ireland will not be satisfied with liberty, because she is not satisfied with slavery, is folly. I laugh at that man who supposes that Ireland will not be content with a free trade and a free constitution, and would any man advise her to be content with less. . .

I do not refer to doubtful history, but to living record; to common charters; to the interpretation England has put upon these charters—an interpretation not made by words only, but crowned by arms; to the revolution she had formed upon them, to the king she has deposed, and to the king she has established; and, above all, to the oath of allegiance solemnly plighted to the House of Stuart, and afterwards set aside in the instance of a grave and moral people absolved by virtue of these very charters.

And as anything less than liberty is inadequate to Ireland, so is it dangerous to Great Britain. We are too near the British nation, we are too conversant with her history, we are too much fired by her example, to be anything less than her equal; anything less, we should be her bitterest enemies—an enemy to that power which smote us with her mace, and to that constitution from whose blessings we were excluded: to be ground as we have been

by the British nation, bound by her Parliament, plundered by her crown, threatened by her enemies, insulted with her protection, while we returned thanks for her condescension, is a system of meanness and misery which has expired in our determination, as I hope it has in her magnanimity.

There is no policy left for Great Britain but to cherish the remains of her empire, and do justice to a country who is determined to do justice to herself, certain that she gives nothing equal to what she received from us when we gave her Ireland.

I am now to address a free people: ages have passed away, and this is the first moment in which you could be distinguished by that appellation.

I have spoken on the subject of your liberty so often that I have nothing to add, and have only to admire by what Heaven-directed steps you have proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation is braced up to the act of her own deliverance.

I found Ireland on her knees, I watched over her with a paternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift! spirit of Molyneux, your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation! in that new character I hail her! and, bowing to her august presence, I say, 'Esto perpetua!'

She is no longer a wretched colony, returning thanks to her governor for his rapine, and to her king for his oppression; nor is she now a squabbling, fretful sectary, perplexing her little wits, and firing her furious statutes with bigotry, sophistry, disabilities, and death, to transmit to posterity insignificance and war.

Look to the rest of Europe, and contemplate yourself, and be satisfied. Holland lives in the memory of past achievements; Sweden has lost liberty; England has sullied her great name by an attempt to enslave her colonies. You are the only people—you, of the nations in Europe, are now the only people who excite admiration, and in your present conduct you not only exceed the present generation, but you equal the past. I am not afraid to turn back and look antiquity in the face. The Revolution, that great event, whether you call it ancient or modern I know not, was tarnished with bigotry: the great deliverer (for such I must ever call the Prince of Nassau) was blemished with oppression; he assented to, he was forced to assent to, acts which deprived the Catholics of religious, and all the Irish of civil and commercial rights, though the Irish were the only subjects in these islands who had fought in his defence. But you have sought

liberty on her own principle: see the Presbyterians of Bangor petition for the freedom of the Catholics of Munster. You, with difficulties innumerable, with dangers not a few, have done what your ancestors wished, but could not accomplish, and what your posterity may preserve, but will never equal; you have moulded the jarring elements of your country into a nation, and have rivalled those great and ancient commonwealths whom you were taught to admire, and among whom you are now to be recorded. In this proceeding you had not the advantages which were common to other great countries: no monuments, no trophies, none of those outward and visible signs of greatness, such as inspire mankind, and connect the ambition of the age which is coming on with the example of that going off, and forms the descent and concatenation of glory; no, you have not had any great act recorded among all your misfortunes, nor have you one public tomb to assemble the crowd, and speak to the living the language of integrity and freedom.

Your historians did not supply the want of monuments; on the contrary, these narrators of your misfortunes, who should have felt for your wrongs, and have punished your oppressors with oppressions, natural scourges, the moral indignation of history, compromised with public villany and trembled; they excited your violence, they suppressed your provocation, and wrote in the chain which entrammelled their country. I am come to break that chain, and I congratulate my country, who, without any of the advantages I speak of, going forth as it were with nothing but a stone and a sling, and what oppression could not take away—the favour of Heaven, accomplished her own redemption, and left you nothing to add, and everything to admire.

You want no trophy now; the records of Parliament are the evidence of your glory. I beg to observe that the deliverance of Ireland has proceeded from her own right hand: I rejoice at it, for had the great requisition of your freedom proceeded from the bounty of England, that great work would have been defective both in renown and security. It was necessary that the soul of the country should have been exalted by the act of her own redemption, and that England should withdraw her claim by operation of treaty, and not of mere grace and condescension: a gratuitous act of Parliament, however express, would have been revocable; but the repeal of her claim under operation of treaty is not: in that case, the legislature is put in covenant, and bound by the law of nations—the only law that can legally bind Parliament. Never did this country stand so high. England and Ireland treat *ex quo*. Ireland transmits to the King her claim of

right, and requires of the Parliament of England the repeal of her claim of power, which repeal the English Parliament is to make under the force of a treaty which depends on the law of nations—a law which cannot be repealed by the Parliament of England.

I rejoice that the people are a party to this treaty, because they are bound to preserve it. There is not a man of forty shillings freehold that is not associated in this our claim of right, and bound to die in its defence; cities, counties, associations, Protestants and Catholics, it seems as if the people had joined in one great national sacrament; a flame has descended from Heaven on the intellect of Ireland, plays round her head, and encompasses her understanding with a consecrated glory.

The following extract is from the speech to which allusion has already been made, as that in which he showed his independence by supporting the Tory Government on the occasion of the renewal of the war against Napoleon. His very admiration of Fox impelled him to show how those who professed to be his followers were misapplying his example, and, in their zeal to thwart the Government, were blinding themselves to the vast differences between the state of France in 1792 and her condition and views at the time at which he was speaking.

(Downfall of Buonaparte.)

The proposition that we should not interfere with the government of other nations is true, but true with qualifications: if the government of any other country contains an insurrectionary principle, as France did when she offered to aid the insurrections of her neighbours, your interference is warranted; if the government of another country contains the principle of universal empire, as France did, and promulgated, your interference is justifiable. Gentlemen may call this internal government, but I call this conspiracy; if the Government of another country maintains a predatory army such as Buonaparte's, with a view to hostility and conquest, your interference is just. He may call this internal government, but I call this a preparation for war. No doubt he will accompany this with offers of peace, but such offers of peace are nothing more than one of the arts of war, attended, most assuredly, by charging on you the odium of a long and protracted contest, and with much commonplace, and many good saws and sayings of the miseries of bloodshed, and the savings and good husbandry of peace, and the comforts of a quiet life; but if you

listen to this, you will be much deceived; not only deceived, but you will be beaten. Again, if the Government of another country covers more ground in Europe, and destroys the balance of power, so as to threaten the independence of other nations, this is a cause of your interference. Such was the principle upon which we acted in the best times; such was the principle of the Grand Alliance, such the Triple Alliance, and such the Quadruple; and by such principles has Europe not only been regulated but protected. If a foreign Government does any of those acts I have mentioned, we have a cause of war; but if a foreign Power does all of them, forms a conspiracy for universal empire, keeps up an army for that purpose, employs that army to overturn the balance of power, and attempts the conquest of Europe—attempts do I say? in a great degree achieves it (for what else was Buonaparte's dominion before the battle of Leipsic), and then receives an overthrow, owes its deliverance to treaties which give that Power its life, and these countries their security (for what did you get from France but security?)—if this power, I say, avails itself of the conditions which give you security, and resumes the same situation which renders this Power capable of repeating the same atrocity, has England, or has she not, a right to war? . . . . .

The authority of Mr. Fox has been alluded to; a great authority, and a great man: his name excites tenderness and wonder. To do justice to that immortal person, you must not limit your view to this country; his genius was not confined to England, it acted three hundred miles off in breaking the chains of Ireland; it was seen three thousand miles off in communicating freedom to the Americans; it was visible, I know not how far off, in ameliorating the condition of the Indian; it was discernible on the coast of Africa in accomplishing the abolition of the slave trade. You are to measure the magnitude of his mind by parallels of latitude. His heart was as soft as that of a woman; his intellect was adamant; his weaknesses were virtues; they protected him against the hard habit of a politician, and assisted nature to make him amiable and interesting. The question discussed by Mr. Fox in 1792 was, whether you would treat with a revolutionary Government? The present is, whether you will confirm a military and a hostile one? You will observe that, when Mr. Fox was willing to treat, the French, it was understood, were ready to evacuate the Low Countries. If you confirm the present Government, you must expect to lose them. Mr. Fox objected to the idea of driving France upon her resources, lest you should make her a military Government. The question now is, whether you will make that military Government perpetual? I therefore do not think the

theory of Mr. Fox can be quoted against us: and the practice of Mr. Fox tends to establish our proposition, for he treated with Buonaparte and failed. Mr. Fox was tenacious of England, and would never yield an iota of her superiority; but the failure of the attempt to treat was to be found, not in Mr. Fox, but in Buonaparte.

On the French subject, speaking of authority, we cannot forget Mr. Burke: Mr. Burke, the prodigy of nature and acquisition. He read everything, he saw everything, he foresaw everything. His knowledge of history amounted to a power of foretelling; and, when he perceived the wild work that was doing in France, that great political physician, intelligent of symptoms, distinguished between the access of fever and the force of health; and what other men conceived to be the vigour of her constitution, he knew to be no more than the paroxysm of her madness, and then, prophet-like, he pronounced the destinies of France, and, in his prophetic fury, admonished nations.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BISHOP TAYLOR.

A.D. 1613–1667.

We have seen how prolific of literary merit was the generation which saw the restoration of the Monarchy. Nor was its fertility confined to works of pure intellect. It produced not only historians and poets of whom any age might have been proud, but a still purer and loftier glory beams upon it from the circumstance that it was also the period which was adorned by many of our greatest theological writers, our most profound controversialists, our most eloquent preachers. It was now that Stillingfleet enlightened the world by his incomparable treatise on 'Natural and Revealed Religion;' that Pearson expounded the Creed; that Barrow, almost equally celebrated as a mathematician and a divine, could command the attention of so careless a listener as Charles himself, while, for hours at a time, he illustrated his sacred themes with every variety of learning; and that Jeremy Taylor (usage has rendered the two names inseparable) presided over his Irish diocese with a wisdom, and instructed his flock with a learning and piety, a copious eloquence and irrepressible energy, which has rendered his name perhaps the most widely celebrated of all the divines of any persuasion that these islands, pre-eminently rich in examples of pulpit oratory as they have always been, have ever produced.

He was born in the middle of the reign of James I., of a family which had somewhat fallen from the consideration which it had enjoyed a century earlier. For his great-grand-father had been Cranmer's chaplain, and had been one of Mary's earliest victims; while his father was but a humble barber-surgeon at Cambridge. He himself was educated in that town, first at the Grammar School, and

then at Caius College. As soon as he had taken his degree he entered into Holy Orders; and having gone to London to assist a sick friend who was lecturer in the great Cathedral of St. Paul's, his exceeding eloquence attracted the notice of Laud, who had lately become Primate of the kingdom, and who procured him a fellowship at All Souls' College, Oxford, of which he was visitor. After a time he quitted that University also, having been presented to the Rectory of Uppingham in Rutland. He married, but lost his wife after three years of marriage, during which she brought him three sons, all of whom died young. And, wishing probably to dispel his grief by a change of scene and of occupation, being at the same time deeply impressed with the degree in which the interests of the Church and of true religion were at stake in the contest between the King and the Parliament, he repaired to Oxford, where Charles was now holding his Court, espousing his cause so warmly that he was on one occasion present at a battle near Cardigan, in which he was taken prisoner. He was soon released, however; the sequestration of his living being thought a sufficient punishment for his delinquency; and in Wales he remained for several years, at first teaching in a school which he established at Newton Hall, and, when he was driven from that, being sheltered by some powerful friends in the Principality during the greater part of Cromwell's protectorate. It is from a house in Caermarthenshire, Golden Grove, then the seat of Lord Carberry, that one of his best known works takes its name. And there too he wrote his eloquent treatise on 'The Liberty of Prophesying,' which was, in fact, a treatise on toleration, the more honorable to his wisdom and moderation that he himself was suffering from the fanatical intolerance of those in authority, and that the instances are very rare in which persecution teaches mercy. It was there too that his great work 'The Life of Christ, or the Great Exemplar' was composed; in which sublimity of devotional feeling, dignity of reflection, and pathetic tenderness are poured forth with a richness of illustration, a profusion of almost poetic embellishment, and a copious mastery of language, of which no modern prose writing had yet furnished an example.

During his sojourn in Wales he married a second wife, Joanna Bridges, who was believed to be a natural daughter of Charles; and who was certainly mistress of a fair estate in the neighbourhood of Golden Grove. Much of the riches which he thus acquired only made him a richer mark for the enmity of those in power, who, by fresh fines and sequestrations stripped him of the greater part of his wealth. Nor were these persecutions confined to mulcting him of his money. On his venturing to visit London in 1654 he was thrown into prison, because some passages in his works were thought to disparage the Independents; and after he was released from that confinement, he was again imprisoned at Chepstow, where he was treated with such rigour that he was not allowed either to write or to receive letters.

Shortly before Cromwell's death he retired to Ireland, where Lord Conway, the ancestor of the present Marquis of Hertford, procured him a lectureship at Lisburn; but even in that remote district the malice of his enemies pursued him; informations were laid against him as one disaffected to the Government; he was brought before the magistrates at Carrickfergus; and he was only finally relieved from danger by the Restoration. Then amends were made to him for his sufferings: he was made Bishop of Down, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dublin. But honours did not change his disposition. He was so far from bearing malice against those who had persecuted him, that some of his earliest efforts as a bishop were directed to the conciliation of the Puritans, and to bringing about a union between them and the Episcopalians. In this object he was not permitted to succeed, but even those whom he could not reconcile to his Church (and the atrocities of Phelim O'Neill being generally attributed to his adherence to the Pope, had created a greater horror of Church Establishments in Ireland than in any part of England) he conciliated to himself; and when the see of Dromore was annexed to Down, as a testimony of the King's approval of his 'wisdom, virtue, and integrity,' even the Puritans admitted that this additional honour could not have been bestowed on anyone who better deserved it. He was not, however, destined long to enjoy it; a fever which he caught in 1667, in the dis-

charge of duties, carried him off after a few days' illness, and at Lisburn, then the cathedral town, he died in the 55th year of his age.

He published many works besides those which have been mentioned; but it is as a preacher that we have to speak of him here, and no verdict has been more unanimous than that which places him as such in the very highest rank. He seems to have been endowed with every quality of eloquence which can make the preacher at once attractive and persuasive. If he wants anything it is emphatic terseness, which is probably incompatible with such a luxuriance of imagination, such fertility of illustration, and such rich copiousness of language as adorn both his writings and his sermons. The only fault that has ever been found with the latter, indeed, has been that they are too profuse in their ornamentation for the severity of the pulpit. But their gorgeous colouring was not designed (as is sometimes the case) to cover indifference; on the contrary, it flowed from something even stronger than sincerity, from an enthusiastic conviction of the truth of the doctrines which he was inculcating, and of the vital importance of these to his hearers, which taught him that no ornament could be superfluous which could attract one careless ear, or fix one wandering heart; and from a profound universal benevolence, which, believing the truths he inculcated with immoveable confidence, would have all men like himself.

The following passages from his fifth sermon, that on 'The Return of Prayer,' and from Sermon 50, on 'The Miracles of the Divine Mercy,' are good examples of the richness of his style, as well as of the profound skill and knowledge of the human heart with which all the arguments and inducements are marshalled which are most calculated to win men over not only to confess but to feel their efficacy.

(The Return of Prayer.)

Many times good men pray, and their prayer is not a sin, but yet it returns empty; because, although the man be, yet the prayer is not, in proper disposition; and here I am to account to you concerning the collateral and accidental hindrances of the prayer of a good man.

The first thing that hinders the prayer of a good man from

obtaining its effects is a violent anger, and a violent storm in the spirit of him who prays. For anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend [illegible]ropulsion, defence, displeasure, or revenge; it is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation; it intends its own object with all the earnestness of perception, or activity of design, and a quicker motion of a too warm and distempered blood; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over; and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray. For prayer is an action and a state of intercourse and desire exactly contrary to this character of anger. Prayer is an action of likeness to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of gentleness and dove-like simplicity; an imitation of the holy Jesus, whose spirit is meek up to the greatness of the biggest example, and a conformity to God; whose anger is always just and marches slowly, and is without transportation, and often hindered, and never hasty, and is full of mercy: prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection; the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighing of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below: so is the prayer of a good man; when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity, his duty met with infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument, and the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest, and overruled the man, and then his

prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention; and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer, and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed, made even as the brow of Jesus, and smooth like the heart of God; and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy Dove, and dwells with God, till it returns, like the useful bee, loaden with a blessing and the dew of heaven.

(The Miracles of the Divine Mercy.)

God hath sent no greater evil into the world than that 'in the sweat of our brows we shall eat our bread,' and in the difficulty and agony, in the sorrows and contentions of our souls, we shall 'work out our salvation.' But see how in the first of these God hath outdone His own anger, and defeated the purposes of His wrath by the inundation of His mercy; for this labour and sweat of our brows is so far from being a curse, that without it our very bread would not be so great a blessing. Is it not labour that makes the garlic and the pulse, the sycamore and the cresses, the cheese of the goats and the butter of the sheep, to be savoury and pleasant as the flesh of the roebuck or the milk of the kine, the marrow of oxen, or the thighs of birds? If it were not for labour men neither could eat so much, nor relish so pleasantly, nor sleep so soundly, nor be so healthful, nor so useful, so strong nor so patient, so noble nor so untempted. And as God hath made us beholden to labour for the purchase of many good things, so the thing itself owes to labour many degrees of its worth and value. And therefore I need not reckon that, besides these advantages, the mercies of God have found out proper and natural remedies for labour; nights to cure the sweat of the day, sleep to ease our watchfulness, rest to alleviate our burdens, and days of religion to procure our rest; and things are so ordered that labour is become a duty and an act of many virtues, and is not so apt to turn into a sin as is its contrary; and is therefore necessary, not only because we need it for making provisions for our life, but even to ease the labour of our rest; there being no greater tediousness of spirit in the world than want of employment and an inactive life; and the lazy man is not only unprofitable, but also accursed, and he groans under the load of his time; which yet passes over the active man light as a dream, or the feathers of a bird; while the disemployed is a disease, and like a long sleepless night to himself, and a load unto his country. And, therefore, although in this particular God hath been so merciful in this infliction that from the sharpness of

the curse a very great part of mankind are freed, and there are myriads of people good and bad who do not 'eat their bread in the sweat of their brows,' yet this is but an overrunning and an excess of the divine mercy; God did more for us than we did absolutely need: for He hath so disposed of the circumstances of this curse that man's affections are so reconciled to it that they desire it and are delighted in it, and so the anger of God is ended in loving kindness, and the drop of water is lost in the full chalice of the wine, and the curse is gone out into a multiplied blessing.

But then for the other part of the severe law and laborious imposition, that we must work out our spiritual interest with the labours of our spirit, seems to most men to be so intolerable that rather than pass under it they quit their hopes of heaven and pass into the portion of devils. And what can there be to alleviate this sorrow, that a man shall be perpetually solicited with an impure tempter, and shall carry a flame within him, and all the world is on fire round about him, and everything brings fuel to the flame, and full tables are a snare, and empty tables are collateral servants to a lust, and help to blow the fire and kindle the heap of prepared temptations; and yet a man must not at all taste of the forbidden fruit, and he must not desire what he cannot choose but desire, and he must not enjoy whatsoever he does violently covet, and must never satisfy his appetite in the most violent importunities, but must therefore deny himself because to do so is extremely troublesome? This seems to be an art of torture, and a device to punish man with the spirit of agony and a restless vexation. But this also hath in it a great ingredient of mercy, or rather is nothing else but a heap of mercy in its entire constitution. For if it were not for this we had nothing of our own to present to God, nothing proportionable to the great rewards of heaven, but either all men, or no man, must go thither; for nothing can distinguish man from man in order to beatitude but choice and election; and nothing can ennoble the choice but love, and nothing can exercise love but difficulty, and nothing can make that difficulty but the contradiction of our appetite and the crossing of our natural affections. And therefore when any of you are tempted violently, or grow weary in your spirits with resisting the petulancy of temptation, you may be cured if you will please but to remember and rejoice that now you have something of your own to give to God, something that He will be pleased to accept, something that He hath given thee, that thou mayest give it Him; for our money and our time, our days of feasting, and our days of sorrow, our discourse and our acts of praise, our prayers and our songs, our vows and our offerings, our worshippings and prostrations, and

whatsoever else can be accounted in the sum of our religion, are only accepted according as they bear along with them portions of our will, and choice of love, and appendent difficulty.

Lætius est quoties magno tibi constat honestum.

So that whoever can complain that he serves God with pains and mortifications, he is troubled because there is a distinction of things such as we call virtue and vice, reward and punishment; and if he will not suffer God to distinguish the first, he will certainly confound the latter; and his portion shall be blackness without variety, and punishment shall be his reward.

DR. CHALMERS.

A.D. 1780–1847.

Our first example of a great preacher has been taken from the Episcopal Church of England and Ireland. Our second may fitly be supplied by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; though Dr. Thomas Chalmers lived too near our own time, and was too intimately connected with a contest in that Church which is not yet altogether terminated, to allow us to say more of his life than that he was born in 1780 at Anstruther, in Fifeshire, where his father was a shipowner; that, having selected the ministry for his profession, he established such a reputation for eloquence that he was appointed minister of one of the principal churches in Glasgow; that, as his fame increased, he obtained the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews, and subsequently that of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh; but that he relinquished his professorship in 1843, when the Church of Scotland was agitated by the disputes about patronage, which ended in the secession of a large body, of which he was one of the most zealous and influential members, who formed what has since been called the Free Church. He died suddenly, of disease of the heart, in 1847.

In the imaginative, and somewhat poetical character of his eloquence, he bore some resemblance to the great Bishop of Down, but he was far inferior in correctness of style and richness of diction. His illustrations are often thoroughly original, his energy irrepressible; and he displays much of

that ardent sincerity, engendering an eagerness to enforce the truth and importance of his belief and opinions on his hearers that lends so powerful a charm to the sermons of Jeremy Taylor.

The first of the following extracts is from Sermon 9 of those preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow; the second from the sixteenth of the same series.

(The Principle of Love to God.)

The term love admits of an equally real and equally intelligent application to our fellow-men. They, too, are the frequent and familiar objects of this affection, and they often are so, because they possess certain accomplishments of person and of character, by which it is excited. I love the man whose every glance speaks an effusive cordiality towards those who are around him. I love the man whose heart and whose hand are ever open to the representations of distress. I love the man who possesses such a softness of nature that the imploring look of a brother in want, or of a brother in pain, disarms him of all his selfishness, and draws him out to some large and willing surrender of generosity. I love the man who carries on his aspect, not merely the expression of worth, but of worth maintained in the exercise of all its graces, under every variety of temptation and discouragement—who, in the midst of calumny, can act the warm and enlightened philanthropist—who, when beset with many provocations, can weather them all in calm and settled endurance—who can be kind even to the unthankful and the evil—and who, if he possesses the awful virtues of truth and justice, only heightens our attachment the more, that he possesses goodness and tenderness and benignity along with them.

Now, we would have you to advert to one capital distinction between the former and the latter class of objects. The inanimate reflect no love upon us back again. They do not single out any one of their admirers, and, by an act of preference, either minister to his selfish appetite for esteem, or minister to his selfish appetite for enjoyment, by affording to him a larger share than to others of their presence, and of all the delights which their presence inspires. They remain motionless in their places, without will and without sensibility; and the homage they receive is from the disinterested affection, which men bear to their loveliness. They are loved, and that purely because they are lovely. There is no mixture of selfishness in the affection that is offered to them. They do not put on a sweeter smile to one man than

to another; but all the features of that beauty in which they are arrayed stand inflexibly the same to every beholder; and he, without any conscious mingling whatever of self-love, in the emotion with which he gazes at the charms of some external scenery, is actuated by a love towards it which rests and which terminates on the objects that he is employed in contemplating.

But this is not always the case when our fellow-men are the objects of this affection. I should love cordiality, and benevolence, and compassion for their own sakes; but let your own experience tell how far more sweetly and more intensely the love is felt when this cordiality is turned, in one stream of kindliness, towards myself—when the eye of friendship has singled out me, and looks at me with a peculiar graciousness—when the man of tenderness has pointed his way to the abode of my suffering family, and there shed in secrecy over them his liberalities and his tears—when he has forgiven me the debt that I was unable to discharge—and when, oppressed as I am by the consciousness of having injured or reviled him, he has nobly forgotten or overlooked the whole provocation, and persists in a regard that knows no abatement, and in a well-doing that is never weary.

(The Union of Truth and Mercy in the Gospel.)

It is due to our want of moral sensibility that sin looks so light and so trivial in our estimation. We have no adequate feeling of its malignity, of its exceeding sinfulness. And, liable as we are to think of God, that He is altogether like unto ourselves, do we think that He may cancel our guilt as easily from the book of His condemnation, by an act of forgiveness, as we cancel it from our own memory by an act of forgetfulness. But God takes His own way, and most steadfastly asserts, throughout the whole process of our recovery, the prerogatives of His own truth and His own righteousness. He so loved the world as to send His Son to it, not to condemn, but to save. But He will not save us in such a way as to confirm our light estimation of sin, or to let down the worth and dignity of His own character.

The method of our salvation is not left to the random caprices of human thought and human fancy. It is a method devised for us by unsearchable wisdom, and made known to us by fixed and unalterable truth, and prescribed to us by a supreme authority, which has debarred every other method; and, though we may behold no one feature, either of greatness or of beauty to admire in it, yet do angels admire it; and to accomplish it did the Son of God move from the residence of His glory; and all heaven appears to have laboured with the magnitude and the mystery of the great

undertaking; and along the whole tract of revelation, from the first age of the world, do we behold the notices of the coming Atonement; and while man sits at his ease, and can see nothing to move him either to gratitude or to wonder in the evolution of that mighty scheme by which mercy and truth have been made to meet together, and righteousness and peace to kiss each other, it is striking to mark the place and the prominency which are given to it in the counsels of the Eternal. And it might serve to put us right, and to rebuke the levities which are so currently afloat in this dead and darkened world, did we only look at the stress that is laid on this great work, throughout the whole of its preparation and its performance, and how to bring it to its accomplishment the Father had to send the Son into the world, and to throw a veil over His glory, and to put the cup of our chastisement into His hand, and to bid the sword of righteous vengeance awake against his fellow, and, that he might clear a way of access to a guilty world, had to do it through the blood of an everlasting covenant, and to lay the full burden of our atonement on the head of the innocent sufferer, and to endure the spectacle of His bitterness, and His agonies, and His tears, till He cried out that it was finished, and so bowed Himself and gave up the ghost.

Man is blind to the necessity, but God sees it. The prayer of Christ in His agony was, that the cup, if possible, might be removed from Him. But it was not possible. He could have called twelve legions of angels, and they would eagerly have flown to rescue their beloved Lord from the hands of His persecutors. But He knew that the Scripture must be fulfilled, and they looked on in silent forbearance. It behoved Him to undergo all this. And there was a need, and a propriety, why He should suffer all these things, ere He entered into His glory.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DEFOE.

A.D. 1661-1731.

THE last kind of literature which remains to be examined is the novel: one which cannot but be approached joyfully by everyone who feels a proper pride in the triumphs of British genius; since, though one or two works of foreign writers are of an excellence which has never been surpassed, yet the number and variety of works of first-rate excellence in this department of composition which our own countrymen have produced places this nation certainly above all competition.

It is not an unfrequent topic with the pretenders to strict wisdom and undeviating usefulness to declaim against novel-reading as a pernicious waste of time; but such a censure might with almost equal reason be pronounced upon the study of poetry: it is one which confounds the good with the bad, and makes no distinction between those works which convey instruction to the mind, or purify and ennoble the feelings, and those which pander to the ill-directed curiosity which restlessly craves to learn the secrets of vice, and interests itself in the fortunes of the unworthy.

The novel which alone deserves the attention either of posterity or of the age in which it is composed, as a work of art, has a resemblance partly to a poem and partly to a drama. It is a narrative heroic or domestic, as the case may be, either created wholly by the imagination, or based on a foundation of truth, and only coloured and embellished by the invention of the author. As such it exhibits many of the qualities which are indispensable in a poem: liveliness of fancy, power of discrimination, felicity of description. Again, it brings before the reader a variety of personages,

in the portrayal of which fidelity to nature, consistency of character, vivacity, wit, humour, and sometimes pathos are displayed; and so far it presents many of the features of the drama. If, as no one questions, the feelings can be refined and the intellect sharpened by the study of an imaginative poem or a well-constructed play, it is not easy to conceive why we should deny that the same service may be done by a novel ingeniously planned and skilfully wrought out; why we should refuse to Flora's self-condemning sorrow the sympathy which we bestow on the bereavement of Constance; or be more ashamed of laughing at Richies Moniplies than at Malvolio.

To bid us to think otherwise is to bid us to set ourselves against the general feeling of mankind, for in truth the novel is a universal favourite; and it is remarkable, as a commentary on the parallel which has been drawn above between the novel and the play, that the Romans, who had nothing worthy of the name of drama, are also, alone of lettered nations, destitute of the novel. The Greeks have bequeathed us one admirable specimen, the 'Cyropædia' of Xenophon, which is as pure a specimen of the historic novel as 'Waverley' or 'Kenilworth;' it is what in modern days would be called a novel with a moral:—a novel that is designed to hold up a particular character or kind of character to admiration; the author's object being, in his picture of Cyrus, to set before the world a model of a virtuous and patriotic king. It would occupy too much of our space to speak of the foreign novelists of modern Europe; though it is to the genius of one of their band, even more than to that of her poets or dramatists, that Spain owes her chief literary fame in other countries; though the severest critics assign to Boccaccio's novels the same merit which is allowed to Pascal's 'Provincial Letters,' of having fixed the language of his country by the purity of his style; and though 'Gil Blas,' 'Atala,' and 'Corinne,' to say nothing of the countless tales that have proceeded from the pens of some of their more recent writers, amply testify that, if the faculties calculated to enable them to shine in the loftier kinds of poetry have been denied to the French, they are abundantly endowed with that ingenuity of invention which enables

them to take a high rank among the writers of prose fiction. It was to novels also that Goethe owed his first celebrity; and, in fact, no modern nation that has any literature at all has omitted to cultivate that species of composition which, under its different names, tale, novel, or romance, has equal attractions for readers of every variety of age, sex, rank, or disposition.

The father of the English novel is Defoe, in whose literary history this circumstance is especially remarkable, that his novels were not the effusions of his sportive youth, but that, having spent his earlier manhood in studies of a severer cast, in which indeed he displayed considerable abilities, though his labours in that way, being directed to subjects of but temporary interest, have long been forgotten, he reserved the lighter compositions, which have made his name immortal, till his old age.

Daniel Defoe, to give him at once the name by which alone he is known (though his real name was Foe, and the more dignified prefix was added from some whim after he reached the age of manhood), was born in London in 1661, being the son of a wealthy Nonconformist butcher, who, designing him for the ministry, gave him an education beyond what might have been expected from his rank in life; so that he boasted in his later days that as a boy he had learnt Greek, Latin, French, and Italian; adding, however, that his master's chief labour had been bestowed in making him and his schoolfellows 'masters of English.' The truth of this latter portion of his assertion he abundantly verified at a later period. It was a stirring time when he reached the age of manhood; he had abandoned the plan of becoming a preacher, entering into business as a hosier, but his heart was more interested in politics than in commerce. The persecution to which his sect was exposed in the time of Charles II. naturally made him an opponent of the Government, and he began to write pamphlets in favour of religious liberty. When James came to the throne he even took up arms as one of Monmouth's soldiers, and thought himself fortunate in escaping the penalties of the Bloody Assize. He fled the country, travelled on the Continent, apparently with a view of establishing commercial relations

with the Spanish and Portuguese merchants; and, on his return to England after an absence of a couple of years, he assumed the name by which he will be for ever known, of Defoe.[1] But again politics drove commerce out of his head. As a school-boy he had been notorious for his love of fighting, and the recollection of his past danger as a follower of Monmouth could not prevent him from again girding on his sword when William landed in Torbay.

It was hardly strange that with such inclinations his mercantile affairs did not prosper: he became a bankrupt, and was forced to flee from London, to avoid the perpetual imprisonment which in those days was the lot of the debtor. But his creditors were convinced of his rectitude of purpose, and agreed to a composition of their claims; and their confidence was justified when, many years afterwards, he paid in full every claim to which he had been liable. As soon as his arrangement of his debts had set him free, he resumed the study of politics with greater zeal than ever, without however neglecting the care of his private affairs, for at the same time he established some brickworks at Tilbury, near the mouth of the Thames, which proved very profitable. But his energy was inexhaustible: while looking after his business he found time to write pamphlet after pamphlet, in one instance opposing the King's views, when he argued against a war with France for reasons which are very honorable to him and prove him to have been in many respects in advance of his age; since the ground which he took up was that 'natural antipathies are no just ground of a war against nations, neither popular opinions; nor is every invasion of a right a good reason for war, until redress has first been peaceably demanded.' But generally he advocated William's policy, and when a low poet of the name of Tutchin[2] wrote a scurrilous poem called the

[1] His most recent biographer, Mr. Lee, says that he originally assumed the name to distinguish himself from his father, but he still occasionally called himself Foe, even in his publications. In his 'Pacificator,' published as late as 1700, he says—

'Let Congreve write the comic: Foe lampoon.'

[2] Pope, in his malice, couples with him Defoe:—

'Earless on high stood unabash'd Defoe,
And Tutchin, flagrant from the scourge, below.'—DUNCIAD, ii. 147.

'Foreigners,' in disparagement of the King's Dutch favourites, Defoe turned poet to reply to him, and his 'True-born Englishman' was so grateful to the Royal taste that he was sent for to Kensington Palace, and 'rewarded,' as he himself affirms, 'beyond his capacity of deserving.'

It is said that William even consulted him about the Partition Treaties, and in the project, already contemplated, of the Scotch Union. But William died, and the views which had found favour with him were no longer acceptable at Court. The Ministers of the new Sovereign introduced a Bill against 'Occasional Conformity,' to disqualify Dissenters from civil employments; and Defoe, who had held one office for a short time in the late reign, and perhaps had been in hopes of obtaining some other, wrote an anonymous pamphlet against it, 'The Shortest Way with Dissenters,' in which he ironically proposed to extinguish Dissent by hanging all who professed it. It had a curious fate: at first it was believed to have expressed the real opinions of the writer, who was greatly lauded for his zeal in defence of the Church; but when its real design was discovered, and it had become also known that he was the writer, he was prosecuted as the author of a libellous publication, heavily fined, pilloried, and sentenced to be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure. That part of the punishment which was intended to be the most ignominious was turned to his honour by his own wit and the sympathy of the citizens: on the very day in which he was placed in the pillory he published 'a Hymn' to that engine with his name, in which he denounced his prosecutors as equally incapable of wit and of understanding the principles of the constitution:

—— the men that placed him here
Are scandals to the times,
Are at a loss to find his guilt,
And can't commit his crimes;

and the mob, partly perhaps out of jest, endorsed his views; they formed a guard round the pillory to protect him from insult, and, instead of the missiles of which the occupant was commonly the aim, garlands were hung around, and flowers showered upon him, wine was brought, his

health was drunk under the platform, and his admirers even provided refreshments for himself at the foot of it after he was taken down. Such a triumph naturally encouraged him to fresh efforts; and while in Newgate he wrote with greater diligence than ever; he even set up a periodical publication, which he called the 'Review,' the parent of the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator,' which he continued to publish three days a week for nine years, writing every number himself, and displaying in many of them great wit and shrewdness, and often, as in the reasons against the war with France, advocating principles which, though now generally admitted, were then entirely novel, and startling to the very wisest statesmen. It is in the 'Review' that the doctrine of free trade was first broached, though it had to wait for a statesman whose father was yet unborn to inaugurate it in action. At last, when Harley became Secretary of State, Defoe was released from prison. He was again presented at Court. In spite of the bill against Occasional Conformity, he was even placed in office; and was employed first in arranging many of the details of the Scotch Union, which was now at last carried out, and afterwards in writing a History of it. Yet once more, on the fall of the Ministry, he was thrown into prison, on the utterly false charge of having by some new pamphlets (the irony of which was again misunderstood) designed to further the restoration of the Stuarts. He had hardly been released when he was assailed by a severer calamity than the enmity of men in power. In 1715 a severe illness of an apoplectic character threatened his life. But after a time the vigour of his constitution prevailed; and as soon as he recovered he resumed his pen with greater energy than ever. His attachment to the principles of the Revolution was so fully recognised by the Ministry of the new dynasty that Lord Sunderland and his colleagues showed their confidence in him by a very singular employment. A man of the name of Mist had set on foot a weekly journal in the interest of the Pretender, which, though the Ministers believed it to be very injurious to the Government, they did not dare to prosecute. Defoe was no stranger to their fears; and, professing that the 'Papists, Jacobites, and

enraged High Tories' by whom it was written, were a 'generation whom his very soul abhorred,' he proposed to the Secretary of State to 'introduce himself in the disguise of a translator of the foreign news' to a connection with the offending newspaper, with the view of acquiring a power of interfering with its management, and, 'without either Mist or any of those concerned with him having the least suspicion or guess of his connection with the Ministry, keeping all offensive articles out of the paper,' and thus, in his own words, 'disabling and enervating it, so as to do no mischief.' His offer was accepted, and for more than a year he continued the strange and rather questionable occupation of furnishing articles to a paper with the express design of defeating the object of its proprietors. He assured the Secretary with whom he corresponded that the dissimulation which it imposed on him was painful to him: that not only was he forced to associate with this 'abhorred generation,' but that he was obliged to listen to their 'traitorous expressions and smile at it all as if he approved of it;' he was obliged to take in and read many 'scandalous and villanous papers,' and often even, for the sake of avoiding suspicion, to allow the insertion of some articles 'which were not a little shocking,' but he remembered Naaman, and, like him, 'bowed himself in the House of Rimmon.' Such a transaction, however, could not long be kept secret. Mist's chief supporters began to be discontented and indignant at the emasculation of their public instructor. In spite of Defoe, Mist was compelled to insert articles of such violence that the Ministers at last searched the office of the paper and arrested him; and at the end of 1719 Defoe broke off the connection, to engage in which at all we must think, in spite of Mr Lee's defence of his conduct, not very consistent with his usual integrity of character, and only to be excused by the sincerity of his conviction that the Government and Protestant liberties of Britain were at stake in the contest.

But politics never engrossed the whole of his attention. In former years, when most occupied in writing for his party, he found time for the composition of a number of moral and religious treatises, which became for a while

almost as popular as any of his political pamphlets; and at the very same time when he was engaged in taking the poison out of Mist's Jacobitism he found leisure for the work which has given him immortality. There are few things stranger in the history of literature than that the book which, above all others in our language, is the delight of every boy in the kingdom, should have been written by a man verging on sixty years of age, suffering under a severe disease, and one whose energies till that time had been wholly devoted to subjects of gravity and importance. It is possible, however, that passages in his earlier life had been, even without his being aware of it, a preparation for the work. While settled at Tilbury he had become master of a yacht, and had amused himself by sailing on the Thames, where he had made acquaintance with the seamen, who in those days, when the love of adventure was hampered with few scruples, varied their voyages in merchantmen with the more profitable enterprises of the buccaneer, which they loved to recount to marvelling landsmen on their return home. Defoe had caught a sufficient portion of their spirit to admire their hardihood; and a little before his illness the public attention had been greatly attracted by the strange adventures of a Scotch seaman named Selcraig or Selkirk, who, in one of the celebrated Dampier's voyages had quarrelled with his captain, and, quitting the expedition, had lived by himself for several years on the desolate island of Juan Fernandez off the coast of Chili. Steele had written a brief account of his sojourn there in one of his periodicals; and now Defoe immortalised him by making it the foundation of a tale to which he gave the name of 'The Life and strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, who lived twenty-eight years all alone on an uninhabited island,' &c. &c. No book had ever been so popular at its first appearance: four editions were sold off in as many months: none have ever had so enduring a popularity; there is probably no year in which it is not still reprinted. At the present day it may be to some extent neglected by grown-up readers, because the unequalled fascination which it exercises over the young has led to its being regarded as a 'boy's book;' but in former days it

has won the admiration of the most judicious and the most rigorous critics. It has been praised with equal warmth by the matter-of-fact Johnson, as one of the few books that the reader ever wished longer, and by the greatest of all novelists, Scott, who has analysed the causes to which its hold on public favour may be ascribed, and who shows that its chief excellence consists 'not in the beauty of the style,' for that, 'though often forcible, is rather rendered so by the interest of a particular situation than by the art of the writer;' nor in the artful 'conducting of the story, for Defoe seems to have written too rapidly to pay the least attention to this;' but 'to the unequalled dexterity with which our author has given an appearance of *reality* to the incidents which he relates.' He compares the book in this respect to 'Gulliver's Travels;' but, as he assigns the superiority to Swift, it will be more seasonable to quote his observations on this point when we come to speak of the Dean's tale.

It was natural that the success of 'Crusoe' should stimulate the author to fresh exertions in the same field. We may pass over his continuation of the work, which appeared in the autumn of the same year, but which only furnishes one more example of the maxim which has come to be accepted almost as a truism, that continuations are always failures; but the greatest novelist could not afford to have the 'Memoirs of a Cavalier' and the 'Life of Captain Carleton' passed over in silence. Scott himself might seem to have taken the idea of the adventures of Dalgetty from the career of the cavalier, who is represented as having at first, as a younger son, sought to push his fortune as a soldier in the German war, and having returned to England, on the breaking out of the Rebellion, to fight for the king. And, as a sort of commentary on the opinion which he has expressed as to the air of reality which is spread over 'Robinson Crusoe,' remarks that 'the contrast between the soldiers of the celebrated Tilly and those of Gustavus Adolphus almost seems too minutely drawn to have been executed from anything short of oracular testimony. But Defoe's genius has shown, in this and other instances, how completely he could assume the character he describes.' Captain

Carleton is represented to have lived a generation later; to have served under the Duke of York against the Dutch, and in Anne's reign, under the Earl of Peterborough, against the French. Of both works Defoe, in his prefaces, professed to be not the author but the editor, putting them forth as original memoirs; those of the cavalier having been 'found by accident, after lying hid for thirty years, in the closet of a descendant of an eminent minister,' while Captain Carleton is honoured with an express description as 'great-nephew to Lord Dudley Carleton, who died Secretary of State to King Charles I.,' and both works have had the singular fortune of having been accepted under the disguise which their author formed for them, being often quoted as genuine works.[1] Fifty years afterwards Johnson spoke of Carleton's memoirs as the best account in the language of the eccentric captor of Barcelona; and the delusion is not wholly exploded to this day. He wrote many other works of the same class, but, in comparison with these masterpieces, they are hardly worth mentioning. They made him not only universally admired, but rich; and he was in the enjoyment of a well-earned prosperity when, in 1731, he died, having just completed his seventieth year.

The appearance of reality with which Defoe invests his narrative cannot perhaps be better exemplified than in the following extract, in which Robinson Crusoe is represented as making his suit of clothes out of skins, and his umbrella. That which follows, from the 'Memoirs of a Cavalier' is the passage to which Scott alludes, for its contrast between the soldiers of the two great German armies.

[1] Defoe's recent editor denies Carleton's memoirs to be his writing, but he seems to have no ground for his denial beyond his own opinion as a critic that it is not in Defoe's style; and on such a point, Mr. Lee's verdict cannot be allowed to counterbalance the decision of Scott and other eminent judges, still less to outweigh the positive evidence in favour of Defoe's authorship. The 'Memoirs of a Cavalier,' too, Mr. Lee does not believe to be wholly Defoe's, regarding his part in it to be that of an editor of a journal really kept by the writer whose composition it professes to be, but enlarged and published by the hand of an experienced author.

(Robinson Crusoe.)

I have mentioned that I saved the skins of all the creatures that I killed, I mean four-footed ones, and I had them hung up stretched out with sticks in the sun, by which means some of them were so dry and hard that they were fit for little, but others, it seems, were very useful. The first thing I made of these was a great cap for my head, with the hair on the outside, to shoot off the rain; and this I performed so well that, after, I made me a suit of clothes wholly of those skins—that is to say, a waistcoat, and breeches open at the knees, and both loose, for they were rather wanting to keep me cool than to keep me warm. I must not omit to acknowledge that they were wretchedly made; for if I was a bad carpenter, I was a worse tailor. However, they were such as I made a very good shift with, and when I was abroad, if it happened to rain, the hair of the waistcoat and cap being outermost, I was kept very dry.

After this, I spent a great deal of time and pains to make an umbrella. I was indeed in great want of one, and had a great mind to make one. I had seen them made in the Brazils, where they are very useful in the great heats which are there, and I felt the heats every jot as great here, and greater too, being nearer the equinox; besides, as I was obliged to be much abroad, it was a most useful thing to me, as well for the rains as the heats. I took a world of pains at it, and was a great while before I could make anything likely to hold; nay, after I thought I had hit the way, I spoiled two or three before I made one to my mind. But at last I made one that answered indifferently well; the main difficulty I found was to make it let down; I could make it spread, but if it did not let down too, and draw in, it would not be portable for me any way but just over my head, which would not do. However, at last, as I said, I made one to answer. I covered it with skins, the hair upwards, so that it cast off the rain like a penthouse, and kept off the sun so effectually that I could walk out in the hottest of the weather with greater advantage than I could before in the coolest, and when I had no need of it I could close it, and carry it under my arm.

The following description of the soldiers engaged on different sides in the Terrible Thirty Years' War, is characterised by Scott as 'almost seeming too minutely drawn to have been executed from anything short of ocular testimony.'

'I that had seen Tilly's army, and his old weather-beaten soldiers, whose discipline and exercises were so exact, and their

courage so often tried, could not look on the Saxon army without some concern for them, when I considered whom they had to deal with. Tilly's men were rugged surly fellows, their faces had an air of hardy courage, mangled with wounds and scars, their armour showed the bruises of musket bullets and the rust of the winter storms. I observed of them their clothes were always dirty, but their arms were clean and bright; they were used to camp in the open fields, and sleep in the frosts and rain; their horses were strong and hardy like themselves, and well taught their exercises; the soldiers knew their business so exactly that general orders were enough; every private man was fit to command; and their wheelings, marchings, counter-marchings, and exercise were done with such order and readiness that the distinct words of command were hardly of any use among them; they were flushed with victory, and hardly knew what it was to fly.

'When I saw the Swedish troops, their exact discipline, their order, the modesty and familiarity of their officers, and the regular living of the soldiers, their camp seemed a well-ordered city; the meanest countrywoman, with her market-ware, was as safe from violence as in the streets of Vienna. There were no regiments of whores and rogues, as followed the Imperialists; nor any women in the camp, but such as being known to the provosts to be the wives of the soldiers, who were necessary for washing linen; taking care of the soldiers' clothes, and dressing their victuals.

'The soldiers were well clad, not gay, furnished with excellent arms, and exceeding careful of them; and though they did not seem so terrible as I thought Tilly's men did when I first saw them, yet the figure they made, together with what we had heard of them, made them seem to me invincible; the discipline and order of their marchings, camping, and exercise was excellent and singular, and which was to be seen in no armies but the King's, his own skill, judgment, and vigilance having added much to the general conduct of armies then in use.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SWIFT.

A.D. 1667–1745.

THOUGH, in some of the classes which have been already examined, we have had occasion to include specimens of several Irish writers, the earliest of them all in point of time, he who is entitled to the credit of having led the way and first won for his fellow-countrymen the appreciation of the literary world abroad, was Jonathan Swift, whom Johnson had included in his list of poets, and whom the great novelist and critic who affirms 'Gulliver's Travels' to be (with the 'Tale of a Tub') the most considerable of his prose works, certainly claimed as a member of the brotherhood of novelists. And as such we take him here, next to Defoe, whom the same great authority [1] regards as having to some extent been his model.

It is true that a recent critic has denied his right to be considered an Irishman, urging truly that both his parents belonged to English families; but he was born in Ireland, was educated in Ireland, held Church preferment in Ireland, and died in Ireland; so that the Irish, who claim him for their countryman, as Grattan did in one of his finest speeches, had certainly a fair foundation for their boast; and to question it in anyone but such an avowed contemner of empty pageantry as Mr. Thackeray, would look something like the pedantry of a Herald or genealogist.

Swift's father, who seems to have been the first of his family to cross the Irish Channel, had settled in Dublin as a barrister; and in Dublin, on the 30th of November, 1667, his only son Jonathan was born. After completing his

[1] Scott's Lives of Defoe and of Swift.

education at Trinity College, where however he does not appear to have distinguished himself, about the time of the Revolution he crossed over to England, to visit his mother, who had long been a widow, and who had returned to her native country. She was a connection of Sir W. Temple, the illustrious negotiator of the Triple Alliance, and she introduced her son to her kinsman, who had acuteness enough at once to discern his talent, and established him in his house as his private secretary. When further acquaintance had increased his opinion of his capacity, Temple presented him to the King, hoping that he would provide for him more effectually than was in his own power. William, however, who had no taste for literature, but little talent for anything but foreign politics, and no regard for any class of men but soldiers, could find no better way of evincing his sense of the value of the great diplomatist's recommendation, than that of offering his secretary the command of a troop of horse. When Swift, though ready enough for conflict of most kinds, declined this military offer, his Majesty gave him one lesson in domestic economy, teaching him to cut asparagus in the Dutch fashion, and to eat it stalk and all; but never offered him any other preferment; so he remained with Temple, and when, at the end of several years, he applied to his kinsman to recompense him for a service of which he had become weary, by procuring him some appointment of a more permanent character, Temple's patronage was but little more discerning than the King's. Swift knew no more of law than he did of war; but Temple obtained for him the post of Deputy Master of the Rolls, and for a year or two he was employed in deciding causes which, it is to be hoped, were of no great importance. He soon grew tired of being a judge, conscious perhaps of his thorough unfitness for such an office; but, unluckily, when he resigned it, he made for himself a choice fully as injudicious as had been made for him by either king or minister.

He decided on taking Holy Orders, for which, beyond a charitable disposition, he had no qualification whatever, and several positive disqualifications: a capricious and violent temper, an utter disregard of public opinion, and a turn of

mind not only satirical but irreverent, and one also which took wanton pleasure in the grossest images and openly mocked at decency of language. It must be admitted indeed that, as a parish clergyman, he discharged his duties with assiduity, and that no trace of his defects can be found in his sermons, which, besides the excellences, which could hardly help flowing from his pen, of cogent argument enforced in perspicuous and appropriate diction, are sound in doctrine and breathe a spirit of sincerity and humanity. But his heart was in the world of literature and politics rather than in his profession. His living, the country parish of Laracor in the county of Meath, seemed banishment to a man fretful in temper and conscious of great abilities; and in the last year of William's reign an opportunity presented itself to him of making his talents not only known but useful to those who were likely to be able to reward them, in the outcry raised against Somers, Halifax, and their colleagues, as the ostensible authors of the Partition Treaties.

It does not appear very clearly what took him to London; but to London he happened to go just at this juncture, when there was the best opening that for many years had been afforded to a man of his talents. He at once plunged earnestly and vigorously into politics, though, with a caution not very habitual to him, he took for the ostensible subject of the first pamphlet in which he defended those whose conduct he approved, not any recent transactions, but the contests and dissensions of Athens and Rome, where the noblest citizens, and those who had deserved best of their respective republics, fell successively victims to popular jealousy, until at last liberty, degenerating into licence, was extinguished by tyranny. So admirably argued and expressed was the essay that it was commonly attributed to the Lord Chancellor himself. Somers, of course, knew better, and sought the acquaintance of the real author, who soon became known to the world in general; and from this time forth his merit as a well-informed and powerful writer was acknowledged, and he became a man of influence in the literary world. He now made yearly visits to England, cultivating and being cultivated

by the most eminent wits and scholars of the day: by Addison, by Steele, by Arbuthnot; and resolved to make his pen the sword with which he would open that oyster the world, and carve out of it a better provision than he as yet enjoyed. But his next publication unluckily injured him more, by the irreverence with which it treated sacred subjects, than it could serve him by the acuteness of its humour and the brilliancy of its wit. The 'Tale of a Tub,' which he published in 1704, written (according to the joint suffrage of judges so different in character, yet all so competent, as Pope, Voltaire, and Scott) with all the humour of Rabelais, but without his extravagance, was designed solely to expose the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and by the exposure to exalt the Church of England; but it attacked many of the Papal doctrines with such unsparing ridicule that even the tenets and practices of the Church which he intended to uphold were bespattered by it; and the impression which the work left on the minds of the generality of readers seems to have been that the writer could have in reality but little belief in or reverence for any religion at all. So strong indeed was this impression that, some years later, the Archbishop of York urged it on Queen Anne as a reason to induce her to overrule the Minister when he proposed to make him a bishop; and the 'Tale of a Tub,' which he always looked on as the work of which he had the greatest reason to be proud, was through life the most effectual bar to his promotion.

It may have been with a view of effacing the suspicion of his indifference on such subjects, that, a year or two afterwards, he published an essay on the advancement of religion, written, like all his works, in a nervous and spirited style, though not very practical in its recommendations; following it up with an essay on 'The Inconveniences which might possibly arise from the Abolition of Christianity,' in which the whole gang of free-thinkers, 'whose genius by continual practice hath been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives against religion, and would therefore never be able to shine or distinguish themselves on any other subject,' are treated with inimitable ridicule. But he could not overcome the impression which he had ori-

ginally given, that he was not fit to be a bishop: though those who thought so were not quite consistent when, in 1713, they appointed him to the principal deanery in Ireland: that of St. Patrick's in Dublin.

Those, however, to whom he owed this promotion were not his original friends. On some provocation which is not very clearly ascertained (probably because he thought himself neglected by them), in the year 1710, he quarrelled with the Whigs, and united himself to Harley and Bolingbroke, who had just become ministers, and who could better appreciate the aid which their administration would derive from one who could wield so powerful a pen. He became the chief writer in the 'Examiner,' and with more than one pamphlet of great ability, vigorously supported their conduct of the negotiations which resulted in the peace of Utrecht. They in return treated him with great cordiality, and he so far believed in their sincerity as to allow, when they offered him the deanery, that they were probably doing the best for him that they were permitted to do. But this conviction did not render the post more acceptable to him. To Dublin he retired with undisguised reluctance, considering it at best but an honorable exile, and he was now of a temper to make light of his grievances to himself or to anyone else. At the same time he had another perplexity, of a kind which has proved intolerable to men of more equal tempers than his. Except that his eyes were of a singularly bright blue, he was far from good-looking, yet he seems to have had the art of inspiring love, even when he probably had no intention of so doing; and though he was now not far short of fifty, two ladies were constantly occupying his time with professions of the most ardent attachment, which one intermingled with complaints arising from a jealousy sufficiently well founded, except in so far as she was not the one who had the first claim on his attentions. They are known in his works by the poetical names of Stella and Vanessa. Stella was a Miss (or in the language of that day Mrs.) Johnson, who had lived almost from her infancy in Sir W. Temple's house, and was believed by many to be his daughter. Vanessa was a Miss Vanhomrigh, the orphan daughter of a wealthy

merchant, with whose widow Swift had become acquainted from living close to her when in London. Vanessa was pretty, lively in her manners, and fond of intellectual amusements; and Swift, to whom she soon learnt to look up as a master of learning and wit, took a pleasure in directing her studies: she fell in love with her tutor, and, soon after his installation in his deanery, removed with her sister to a small property which their father had left them in Kildare; probably not knowing as yet of Stella's existence, certainly never suspecting that the Dean had already established that lady in Dublin itself, at no great distance from his deanery. Soon, however, she learnt the fact: Stella too became informed that she had a rival, and both of them beset him with continual solicitations and expressions of their apprehensions; it would be incorrect to say reproaches, for both appear to have been too deeply in love with him to conceive anger against him, even when most strongly suspecting that his preference was given to her rival. At last, in 1716, he married Stella, to whom he had probably long since engaged himself as strongly as mutual vows could bind them; insisting at the same time that their marriage should be kept a profound secret; while, perhaps to blind the world more effectually, he still continued his visits to Vanessa, whose home at Celbridge was only a few miles from the city; not that he in the least encouraged her passion for him: for, on the contrary, he promoted the suit of others for her hand, whom, however, she uniformly rejected. The end of both was melancholy. Vanessa at last obtained such a certainty of his intercourse with Stella that she took the somewhat bold step of writing to her, to enquire what claim she had on the Dean; and Swift, on receiving the letter from his wife, broke off all acquaintance with the writer, treating her with such sternness that, after a few weeks, she died of a broken heart. Stella's fate was not much happier. She was conscious that she was generally believed to be his mistress, and the vexation to which she was exposed gradually broke down her health. In 1727 Swift, who, after an absence of nearly fifteen years, had lately gone on a visit to England, heard that she was dying. He was deeply afflicted: he hastened back to

Dublin, and offered to acknowledge his marriage; the remedy, as she too truly said, 'came too late.' She died at the beginning of 1728, all the comfort which she had derived from her marriage being a set of poetical congratulations on her successive birth-days, which to us, who know how her life was wrecked, read as cruel mockeries, though there is no doubt that, after his own eccentric fashion, her husband was really attached to her.

Meanwhile, in the interval between her marriage and her death, he had been acquiring a reputation among his own countrymen which no one had ever equalled. The service which his pen had done to his party in England had hardly been heard of across the Channel; but in 1723 a patent which gave an English ironmaster named Wood authority to issue a copper coinage for the use of the Irish, excited the whole people to a degree of resentment which no real injury had ever kindled among them. The money was urgently required; the coins were of good metal and well executed; but King James's brass money was still remembered in every part of the kingdom, and even that worthless coin had not been equally unpopular. The Irish Parliament voted addresses to represent to the King that the patent would ruin the revenue and trade of the country; the Lord Chancellor, though a member of the Government, concurred in the opinion, or at least in the assertion; and, while the discontent was at its height, Swift issued a series of letters, professedly written by a Dublin draper who feared to subscribe them with more than the initials of his name, M. B., in which he brought to bear every resource of wit, humour, and invective that the most fertile genius could supply to discredit the measure. Wood himself was the principal mark for attack; but King, minister, and above all, the King's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, who, as was learnt in the course of the discussion, had received a bribe from Wood to procure the sealing of the patent, came in for their share of the reproaches which were levelled at everyone concerned. So violent and universal was the clamour that Walpole, who was on principle averse to forcing measures on the people against their will, revoked the patent; and as in spite of the concealment of the

author's name, 'The Drapier's Letters,' to which the revocation was unanimously ascribed, were universally known to have been written by Swift, the whole nation agreed in looking on him as its benefactor, and to the end of his days regarded him with gratitude and respect.

In inscribing the 'Dunciad' to Swift, Pope sums up his titles with 'Gulliver,' and attributes to him an imitation, not of Defoe, whom the poet disparages, but of 'Cervantes' serious air.'[1] It is rarely easy to fix on the degree in which one writer borrows from another, especially when the appropriation does not go beyond the plan of a work. Swift was undoubtedly a man of extensive reading; and Scott has traced the original idea of 'a fictitious journey through imaginary countries,' through English, French, and Spanish writers,[2] up to Lucian. But, as a French contemporary said of him, Swift had in a high degree 'L'esprit créateur;' and the invention of the details of the voyages was certainly all his own. 'Gulliver's Travels, to Lilliput, or the land of pigmies; to Brobdingnag, or the country of giants; to Laputa, or the island of philosophers; and to the kingdom of the Houyhnhnms, or horses,' were published in 1726, anonymously (as 'The Drapier's Letters' had been); but his friends had already seen portions of them, and the secret, which he probably did not wish to be kept, was in fact never a secret at all. They produced as universal and as immediate a sensation as 'Robinson Crusoe.' 'They were read from the highest to the lowest, and from the Cabinet Council to the nursery.'[3] And the great writer whose words I am quoting explains the causes of their popularity when he describes them as offering 'personal and political satire to the readers in high life; low and coarse incident to the vulgar, marvels to the romantic, wit to the young and lively, lessons of morality and policy to the grave, and maxims of deep and bitter misanthropy to neglected age and disappointed ambition.' That the first voyage, that to Lilliput, has reference to the Court and politics of England at the time is well known. But the attraction of political

[1] Dunciad, i. 20.

[2] He mentions especially 'The Man in the the Moon,' by Goodwin, Bishop of Llandaff, and Rabelais' 'Voyage of Pantagruel.'

[3] Scott's Life of Swift, p. 289.

satire passes away with its objects; and readers of a subsequent age admire the work for the strange appearance of reality with which the whole narrative is invested, whether the traveller is among pigmies or giants; visiting a people so scientific that the tailor measures him for a coat by computing his altitude with a quadrant; or fallen to be the servant of a race of horses, whose master does him incredible honour by raising his hoof to his mouth that he may kiss it without prostrating himself.

The comparison which Scott makes between Swift and Defoe has already been alluded to. 'The genius of Defoe,' he says, 'has never been questioned; but his sphere of information was narrow, and hence his capacity of fictitious invention was limited to one or two characters. . . . In this respect he is limited, like the sorcerer in the Indian tale, whose powers of transformation were confined to assuming the likeness of two or three animals only. But Swift seems, like the Persian dervise, to have possessed the faculty of transfusing his own soul into the body of anyone whom he selected: of seeing with his eyes, employing every organ of his sense, and even becoming master of the powers of his judgment.' [1] . . . Every one he mentions 'maintains his own character, moves in his own sphere, and is struck with those circumstances which his situation in life or habits of thinking have rendered most interesting to him as an individual.' [2] And, in another place, he points out the great accuracy with which, in speaking of the people and inanimate objects seen in Lilliput and Brobdingnag, the proportions are preserved; and the curious mode in which the traveller's mind seems to conform to the dimensions around him, and to think of what is great and small, not according to the English standard, but according to that of Lilliput or Brobdingnag. Thus Gulliver talks with solemnity of the stately trees in his Majesty's park at Lilliput, the tops of some of which he could hardly reach; and celebrates with becoming admiration the prodigious leap of one of the imperial huntsmen, over his foot, shoe and all. In like manner he undervalues the tower of the great temple at Brobdingnag, which, though 3,000 feet high, is,

[1] Life, p. 439. [2] Appendix V.

he thinks, hardly equal in proportion to Salisbury steeple.' But these and all other laudatory criticisms are in fact reducible to the one grand principle that there is no good writing of any kind without consistency of character, without the whole being, to borrow an expression from the painter's art, in keeping. And the faculty possessed by Defoe, and in a higher degree by Swift, of identifying himself with the feeling of the persons whom they portray is only the act of preserving that consistency in the highest perfection.

The last of the voyages, that to the Houyhnhnms, is by all critics excepted from the panegyric which they pass on the other three. The representation of mankind as subject to brute beasts is repugnant to every proper feeling, and it moreover involves too gross a violation of probability. For, as Scott points out, 'there are degrees of probability proper to even the wildest fiction.' But, even while he condemns this part of the work, he finds excuse for the misanthrophy which dictated it in the state of 'his personal health, broken and worn down by the recurring attacks of a frightful disorder; his social comfort, destroyed by the death of one beloved object, and the daily decay and peril of another; his life decayed into autumn, and its remainder, after so many flattering and ambitious prospects, condemned to a country which he hated, and banished from that in which he had formed his hopes and left his friendships.' He finds a moral, too, in the picture of the Yahoos, the men whom Swift represents as servants to the horses. 'It was never designed as a representation of mankind in the state to which religion and even the lights of nature encourage men to aspire, but of that to which our species is degraded by the wilful subservience of mental qualities to animal instincts: of man such as he may be found in the degraded ranks of every society when brutalized by ignorance and gross vice.'

It is remarkable that the majority of Swift's writings after the death of Stella, whom he survived nearly eighteen years, were poetical, but his end was melancholy in the extreme. As early as 1717 it is recorded of him that, perceiving the upper branches of a fine elm to be withered, he

remarked, 'I shall be like that tree; I shall die at top.' And the feeling increased so much, engendering at the same time a sympathy for all such sufferers, that, shortly after his wife's death, he began to form plans for building and endowing a lunatic asylum, which he eventually carried out. From the commencement of middle age he had been subject to fits of giddiness; his hearing too began to be impaired; and by the year 1736 the increasing frequency of these attacks, and his deafness, which was now confirmed, rendered him incapable of mixing in society. After a time it became obvious that he was unfit any longer to manage his own affairs: his property was put under the management of trustees; and in a state of imbecility, varied by paroxysms of furious frenzy, he lingered till October 1745, when he died in Dublin. He was followed to the grave by all ranks of his countrymen, whose gratitude for the services which they believed him to have rendered them was as vivid as if he had died on the very day on which the grand jury threw out the bill against the printer of 'The Drapier's Letters.'

Johnson has pointed a moral from his fate, expiring 'a driveller and a show,' but the very lines imply an unwilling compliment to his genius; unwilling, because the great moralist certainly regarded his character with but little favour. Yet he speaks of his dotage as 'the folly of the *wise*.' Wisdom, in the higher sense of the word, may not perhaps be exactly the intellectual quality which we should be most inclined to attribute to him; but his wit, his humour, his fertility of invention, his purity of style, (though not embellished by any great command of language), have deservedly placed him in the very front rank of English authors.

The following extract from the first voyage, that to Lilliput, shows the art with which Swift blends satire with his narrative; as well as the skill with which he unfailingly preserves the proportions suitable to a race not six inches high. Flimnap was meant for Sir Robert Walpole, who, a few years before, had been dismissed from office through the intrigues of Sunderland. The cushion which broke his fall was the influence of the Duchess of

Kendal; the jumping for the silken threads alludes to the eagerness for the ribbons of the Bath and the Garter, shown by even the highest nobles; yet all this covert satire is so skilfully managed as to lend piquancy and reality to the story looked on simply as a novel.

(Gulliver's Travels.)

The emperor had a mind one day to entertain me with several of the country shows, wherein they exceed all nations I have known, both for dexterity and magnificence. I was diverted with none so much as that of the rope-dancers, performed upon a slender white thread, extended about two feet, and twelve inches from the ground. Upon which I shall desire liberty, with the reader's patience to enlarge a little.

This diversion is only practised by those persons who are candidates for great employments and high favour at court. They are trained in this art from their youth, and are not always of noble birth or liberal education. When a great office is vacant, either by death or disgrace (which often happens), five or six of those candidates petition the emperor to entertain his majesty and the court with a dance on the rope; and whoever jumps the highest, without falling, succeeds in the office. Very often the chief ministers themselves are commanded to show their skill, and to convince the emperor that they have not lost their faculty. Flimnap, the treasurer, is allowed to cut a caper on the straight rope at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together, upon a trencher fixed on a rope, which is no thicker than a common pack-thread in England. My friend Reldresal, principal secretary for private affairs, is, in my opinion, if I am not partial, the second after the treasurer; the rest of the great officers are much upon a par.

These diversions are often attended with fatal accidents, whereof great numbers are on record. I myself have seen two or three candidates break a limb. But the danger is much greater when the ministers themselves are commanded to show their dexterity; for, by contending to excel themselves and their fellows, they strain so far that there is hardly one of them who has not received a fall, and some of them two or three. I was assured that, a year or two before my arrival, Flimnap would infallibly have broke his neck, if one of the king's cushions, that accidentally lay on the ground, had not weakened the force of his fall.

There is likewise another diversion, which is only shown before the emperor and empress, and first minister, upon particular occasions. The emperor lays on the table three fine silken threads of

six inches long; one is blue, the other red, and the third green. These threads are proposed as prizes for those persons whom the emperor has a mind to distinguish by a peculiar mark of his favour. The ceremony is performed in his majesty's great chamber of state, where the candidates are to undergo a trial of dexterity, very different from the former, and such as I have not observed the least resemblance of in any other country of the new or old world. The emperor holds a stick in his hands, both ends parallel to the horizon, while the candidates, advancing one by one, sometimes leap over the stick, sometimes creep under it, backward and forward, several times, according as the stick is advanced or depressed. Sometimes the emperor holds one end of the stick, and the first minister the other; sometimes the minister has it entirely to himself. Whoever performs his part with most agility, and holds out the longest in leaping and creeping, is rewarded with the blue-coloured silk; the red is given to the next, and the green to the third, which they all wear girt twice round about the middle; and you see few great persons about this court who are not adorned with one of these girdles.

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It is the custom, that every Wednesday (which as I have before observed, is their Sabbath), the king and queen, with the royal issue of both sexes, dine together in the apartment of his majesty, to whom I was now become a great favourite; and at these times, my little chair and table were placed at his left hand, before one of the salt-cellars. This prince took a pleasure in conversing with me, inquiring into the manners, religion, laws, government, and learning of Europe; wherein I gave him the best account I was able. His apprehension was so clear, and his judgment so exact, that he made very wise reflections and observations upon all I said. But, I confess that, after I had been a little too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade, and wars by sea and land, of our schisms in religion, and parties in the state, the prejudices of his education prevailed so far that he could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and, stroking me gently with the other, after a hearty fit of laughing, asked me, 'Whether I was a Whig or Tory?' Then turning to his first minister, who waited behind him with a white staff, near as tall as the mainmast of the 'Royal Sovereign,' he observed, 'how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I; and yet,' says he, 'I dare engage, these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour; they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage; they love, they fight,

they dispute, they cheat, they betray!' And thus he continued on, while my colour came and went several times, with indignation, to hear our noble country, the mistress of arts and arms, the scourge of France, the seat of virtue, piety, honour, and truth, the pride and envy of the world, so contemptuously treated.

But as I was not in a condition to resent injuries, so, upon mature thought, I began to doubt whether I was injured or no. For, after having been accustomed several months to the sight and converse of this people, and observed every object upon which I cast my eyes to be of proportionable magnitude, the horror I had at first conceived, from their bulk and aspect, was so far worn off that, if I had then beheld a company of English lords and ladies in their finery and birthday clothes, acting their several parts in the most courtly manner of strutting, and bowing, and prating, to say the truth, I should have been strongly tempted to laugh as much at them as the king and his grandees did at me. Neither, indeed, could I forbear smiling at myself, when the queen used to place me upon her hand towards a looking-glass, by which both our persons appeared before me in full view together, and there could be nothing more ridiculous than the comparison; so that I really began to imagine myself dwindled many degrees below my usual size.

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When all was ready, and the day came for my departure, I took leave of my master and lady, and the whole family; my eyes flowing with tears, and my heart quite sunk with grief. But his honour, out of curiosity, and, perhaps (if I may speak it without vanity), partly out of kindness, was determined to see me in my canoe, and got several of his neighbouring friends to accompany him. I was forced to wait above an hour for the tide; and then, observing the wind very fortunately bearing towards the island to which I intended to steer my course, I took a second leave of my master; but as I was going to prostrate myself to kiss his hoof, he did me the honour to raise it gently to my mouth. I am not ignorant how much I have been censured for mentioning this last particular. Detractors are pleased to think it improbable that so illustrious a person should descend to give so great a mark of distinction to a creature so inferior as I. Neither have I forgotten how apt some travellers are to boast of extraordinary favours they have received. But if these creatures were better acquainted with the noble and courteous disposition of the Houyhnhnms, they would soon change their opinion.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NOVELISTS—(continued).

As between Jonson and Goldsmith there was a school of dramatists whose talent no one could deny, but whose works at the same time no one could cite, much less recommend for perusal; so the middle of the last century produced writers of novels of the very first class as men of ability and also of artistic skill, whose works are almost equally proscribed by modern taste, which in their case cannot be pronounced needlessly delicate and fastidious. Not, indeed, that Fielding, Smollett, or even Sterne is to be branded like Wycherley and his dramatic followers, as designing to recommend vice, or even as indifferent to the attractions of virtue; but that the indelicacy and coarseness of the age in which they lived, instead of being kept out of sight or even softened, are too faithfully reproduced in their writings: that they, and more especially the two last, write as if they had a taste for coarseness rather than for refinement. They were contented with, they certainly had no wish to improve, the manners of the times. Yet the most rigid censors have allowed that, as an artist, Fielding has no superior; that, for the skilful construction of a plot, for the address with which every incident bears upon and advances the catastrophe, and at the same time illustrates the characters of the persons concerned, his novels are models; and that no inferior praise is due to the truth, spirit, and consistency with which the characters are drawn. Nor are his characters all of the coarser kind. On the contrary, one is said to have been drawn to the life from a learned and most respectable friend. And with such skill is he delineated in every part that, once more to quote the critical panegyric

of the greatest of all subsequent novelists, Parson Adams's 'learning, his simplicity, his evangelical purity of heart and benevolence of disposition are so admirably mingled with pedantry, absence of mind, and with the habit of athletic and gymnastic exercises then acquired at the Universities by students of all descriptions, that he may safely be termed one of the richest productions of the school of fiction.' And no one will deny the delicacy and tenderness which he has infused into some of his portraits of women. Sophia Western is in every point a lady (a character which must be very difficult to draw, if we consider how very rarely those who attempt the task have succeeded), and Amelia, who is reported to have been drawn from his own wife, is endowed with such purity and gentleness that the beauty of the picture has been judged to have atoned to Mrs. Fielding in some degree for the trials of her patience and love to which he himself subjected her in no less a degree than Booth tried the temper of Amelia.

Between Fielding and Smollett Scott has instituted a most careful and judicious comparison, assigning to the former a higher and purer taste, greater elegance of composition and expression, more address in the conduct of his story, and finally a power of describing amiable and virtuous characters, and of placing before us heroes, and especially heroines, of a much higher and more pleasing stamp than Smollett was able to conceive; but allowing, on the other hand, to Smollett more 'brilliancy of genius, more inexhaustible richness of invention.' It is impossible to avoid coinciding in this opinion. But the more we admit its correctness, the more evident does the superior influence of taste even to fertility of invention and liveliness of wit appear as a source of enduring popularity; for there can be no question that, in the general estimation, Fielding bears the palm from his rival. Peregrine Pickle and Roderick Random may not be more dissolute than Tom Jones; but the latter has the manners, and almost always displays the feelings of a gentleman, while Smollett's heroes are often vulgar, if not brutal in their coarseness. Fielding himself was probably far less correct in his way of life than Smollett, but his superior judgment prevented his offending the taste

of others; and Smollett, who lacked this safeguard, enjoys, for want of it, a far lower reputation than his unquestioned genius would entitle him to.

The third of this triumvirate, in richness of invention and variety, falls far beneath the others. One is ashamed to add that, though a clergyman, he also sins against decorum far more deeply, because far more wantonly and needlessly than they. He had a vile delight in indelicate images and indecent language, and indulged his fancy when they were so far from being required or excused by the course of his story that they rather mar its effect. They have not even the excuse of coinciding with the habits of the time, for a well-known anecdote proves that he was reproached by a friend for his uncalled-for indecencies. On the other hand, in the exquisite skill and humour with which he has portrayed two or three characters, and in the pathos which he has thrown into one of his episodes, he is inferior to neither, nor to any other author of fiction. His latest critic [1] has denied his naturalness (if it be lawful to coin such a word), has called his sensibility 'artistic,' the creation, that is, of a play actor, not of a man of genuine feeling; and, because he sees in his most striking passages not so much an inclination to laugh himself as a determination to make the reader laugh, denies him the praise of humour altogether; and, even while admitting his power to excite our mirth or elicit our tears at his will, pronounces him 'a great jester, not a great humourist.' To speak thus is to do great injustice not only to the painter of those unrivalled portraits, Uncle Toby, the Corporal, and Yorick, but to the host of readers with whom for more than a century they have been household words, and who have believed (and the belief is not likely to be extinguished by a solitary sneer) that they proceeded from a genius which in its peculiar and limited line has had no superior. It is a sufficient condemnation of Sterne that, even of his warmest admirers, none hesitate to visit his wanton outrages upon propriety with a reprobation which they can find grounds for forbearing with reference to the

[1] Thackeray in his 'Humourists,' p. 303.

freespoken plainness of Fielding, or the coarser vulgarities which too often disfigure the pages of Smollett.

The 'Vicar of Wakefield' has already been alluded to in the sketch which has been given of Smollett. Coming out, as it did, almost immediately after 'Tristram Shandy,' its perfect purity (united with great humour, as shown in the characters of the Vicar and Moses) may be looked on almost as a designed protest against the impurities of Sterne. But Goldsmith gave no further specimen of his abilities as a novelist. And it was reserved for the present century to produce a writer who could unite all the good qualities of his predecessors, wit, humour, and invention, with a learning to which they made no claim, and a poetic fire which had not been bestowed on them, and show that the freest exercise of all these attributes of genius was compatible with a high-bred purity of feeling to which coarseness and impropriety were alike abhorrent. Of the varied charms of Scott's novels we have already spoken. The first of the following extracts is a fair specimen of his power of describing in prose the beauties of natural scenery; his painting of which, as we have already seen, lends so great a charm to his poetry.

(Rob Roy, vol. ii. ch. xi.)

The Forth, however, as far as the imperfect light permitted me to judge, seemed to merit the admiration of those who claimed an interest in its stream. A beautiful eminence of the most regular round shape, and clothed with copsewood of hazels, mountain ash, and dwarf-oak, intermixed with a few magnificent old trees, which, rising above the underwood, exposed their forked and bared branches to the silver moonshine, seemed to protect the sources from which the river sprung. If I could trust the tale of my companion, which, while professing to disbelieve every word of it, he told under his breath, and with an air of something like intimidation, this hill, so regularly formed, so richly verdant, and garlanded with such a beautiful variety of ancient trees and thriving copsewood, was held by the neighbourhood to contain, within its unseen caverns, the palaces of the fairies; a race of airy beings who formed an intermediate class between men and demons, and who, if not positively malignant to humanity, were yet to be avoided and feared, on account of their capricious, vindictive, and irritable disposition.

'They ca' them,' said Mr. Jarvie, in a whisper, 'Daoine Schie,

whilk signifies, as I understand, men of peace; meaning thereby to make their gude-will. And we may e'en as well ca' them that too, Mr. Osbaldistone, for there's nae gude in speaking ill o' the laird within his ain bounds.' But he added, presently after, on seeing one or two lights which twinkled before us, 'It's deceits o' Satan, after a', and I fearna to say it; for we are near the manse now, and yonder are the lights in the Clachan of Aberfoil.'

(Rob Roy, vol. ii. ch. xiii.)

Our route, though leading towards the lake, had hitherto been so much shaded by wood, that we only from time to time obtained a glimpse of that beautiful sheet of water. But the road now suddenly emerged from the forest ground, and, winding close by the margin of the loch, afforded us a full view of its spacious mirror, which now, the breeze having totally subsided, reflected in still magnificence the high dark heathy mountains, huge grey rocks, and shaggy banks by which it is encircled. The hills now sunk on its margin so closely, and were so broken and precipitous, as to afford no passage except just upon the narrow line of the track which we occupied, and which was overhung with rocks, from which we might have been destroyed merely by rolling down stones, without much possibility of offering resistance. Add to this, that, as the road winded round every promontory and bay which indented the lake, there was rarely a possibility of seeing a hundred yards before us.

Nor is he less powerful and real in his description of female beauty; it almost looks like a challenge to poets in one of their peculiar fields; and, if ever poets have felt

——how feebly words essay
To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray,

it must be far harder for those writers to do it whose vehicle is the soberer language of prose. Yet, in spite of this drawback, it will be admitted that the portrait of the fair Saxon noble as here presented has rarely been surpassed; and there is not only delicacy but variety in the way in which her consciousness of birth, rank, and acknowledged superiority has impressed a loftier character on her gentle lineaments.

(Ivanhoe, vol. i. ch. iv.)

Formed in the best proportions of her sex, Rowena was tall in stature, yet not so much so as to attract observation on account of

superior height. Her complexion was exquisitely fair, but the noble cast of her head and features prevented the insipidity which sometimes attaches to fair beauties. Her clear blue eye, which sate enshrined beneath a graceful eyebrow of brown sufficiently marked to give expression to the forehead, seemed capable to kindle as well as melt, to command as well as to beseech. If mildness were the more natural expression of such a combination of features, it was plain that, in the present instance, the exercise of habitual superiority, and the reception of general homage, had given to the Saxon lady a loftier character, which mingled with and qualified that bestowed by nature. Her profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and flaxen, was arranged in a fanciful and graceful manner in numerous ringlets, to form which art had probably aided nature. These locks were braided with gems, and being worn at full length, intimated the noble birth and free-born condition of the maiden. A golden chain, to which was attached a small reliquary of the same metal, hung round her neck. She wore bracelets on her arms, which were bare: her dress was an under-gown and kirtle of pale sea-green silk, over which hung a long loose robe, which reached to the ground, having very wide sleeves, which came down, however, very little below the elbow. This robe was crimson, and manufactured out of the very finest wool. A veil of silk, interwoven with gold, was attached to the upper part of it, which could be at the wearer's pleasure either drawn over the face and bosom, after the Spanish fashion, or disposed as a sort of drapery round the shoulders.

In poetry Scott's strength had been judged to lie most in the spirit-stirring scenes of battle; and, if unrivalled by any modern poet in such descriptions, in prose he has still more surpassed all rivals.

(Ivanhoe, vol. i. ch. ix.)

The pause in the tournament was still uninterrupted, excepting by the voices of the heralds exclaiming, 'Love of ladies, splintering of lances! stand forth, gallant knights; fair eyes look upon your deeds!'

The music also of the challengers breathed from time to time wild bursts, expressive of triumph or defiance, while the clowns grudged a holiday which seemed to pass away in inactivity; and old knights and nobles lamented in whispers the decay of martial spirit, spoke of the triumphs of their younger days, but agreed that the land did not now supply dames of such transcendent beauty as had animated the jousts of former times. Prince John began to talk to his attendants about making ready the banquet,

and the necessity of adjudging the prize to Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had, with a single spear, overthrown two knights and foiled a third.

At length, as the Saracenic music of the challengers concluded one of those long and high flourishes with which they had broken the silence of the lists, it was answered by a solitary trumpet, which breathed a note of defiance from the northern extremity. All eyes were turned to see the new champion which these sounds announced, and no sooner were the barriers opened than he paced into the lists. As far as could be judged of a man sheathed in armour, the new adventurer did not greatly exceed the middle size, and seemed to be rather slender than strongly made. His suit of armour was formed of steel richly inlaid with gold, and the device on his shield was a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word 'Desdichado,' signifying Disinherited. He was mounted on a gallant black horse, and as he passed through the lists, he gracefully saluted the Prince and the ladies by lowering his lance. The dexterity with which he managed his steed, and something of youthful grace which he displayed in his manner, won him the favour of the multitude, which some of the lower classes expressed by calling out 'Touch Ralph de Vipont's shield—touch the Hospitaller's shield; he has the least sure seat, he is your cheapest bargain.'

The champion, moving onward amid these well-meant hints, ascended the platform by the sloping alley which led to it from the lists, and, to the astonishment of all present, riding straight up to the central pavilion, struck with the sharp end of his spear the shield of Brian de Bois-Guilbert until it rang again. All stood astonished at his presumption, but none more than the redoubted Knight whom he had thus defied to mortal combat, and who, little expecting so rude a challenge, was standing carelessly at the door of the pavilion.

'Have you confessed yourself, brother,' said the Templar, 'and have you heard mass this morning, that you peril your life so frankly?'

'I am fitter to meet death than thou art,' answered the Disinherited Knight; for by this name the stranger had recorded himself in the books of the tourney.

'Then take your place in the lists,' said Bois-Guilbert, 'and look your last upon the sun; for this night thou shalt sleep in paradise.'

'Gramercy for thy courtesy,' replied the Disinherited Knight, 'and to requite it I advise thee to take a fresh horse and a new lance, for by my honour you will need both.'

Having expressed himself thus confidently he reined his horse backward down the slope which he had ascended, and compelled him in the same manner to move backward through the lists till he reached the northern extremity, where he remained stationary, in expectation of his antagonist. This feat of horsemanship again attracted the applause of the multitude.

However incensed at his adversary for the precautions which he recommended, Brian de Bois-Guilbert did not neglect his advice; for his honour was too nearly concerned to permit his neglecting any means which might ensure victory over his presumptuous opponent. He changed his horse for a proved and fresh one of great strength and spirit. He chose a new and a tough spear, lest the wood of the former might have been strained in the previous encounters he had sustained. Lastly, he laid aside his shield, which had received some little damage, and received another from his squires. His first had only borne the general device of his rider, representing two knights riding upon one horse, an emblem expressive of the original humility and poverty of the Templars, qualities which they had since exchanged for the arrogance and wealth that finally occasioned their suppression. Bois-Guilbert's new shield bore a raven in full flight, holding in its claws a skull, and bearing the motto, *Gare le Corbeau.*

When the two champions stood opposed to each other at the two extremities of the lists, the public expectation was strained to the highest pitch. Few augured the possibility that the encounter could terminate well for the Disinherited Knight, yet his courage and gallantry secured the general good wishes of the spectators.

The trumpets had no sooner given the signal than the champions vanished from their posts with the speed of lightning, and closed in the centre of the lists with the shock of a thunderbolt. The lances burst into shivers up to the very grasp, and it seemed at the moment that both knights had fallen, for the shock had made each horse recoil backwards upon its haunches. The address of the riders recovered their steeds by use of the bridle and spur; and having glared on each other for an instant with eyes that seemed to flash fire through the bars of their visors, each made a demivolte, and, retiring to the extremity of the lists, received a fresh lance from the attendants.

A loud shout from the spectators, waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs, and general acclamations, attested the interest taken by the spectators in this encounter, the most equal, as well as the best performed, which had graced the day. But no sooner had the knights resumed their station than the clamour of applause was hushed into a silence, so deep and so dead that it seemed the multitude were afraid even to breathe.

A few minutes' pause having been allowed, that the combatants and their horses might recover breath, Prince John with his truncheon signed to the trumpets to sound the onset. The champions a second time sprung from their stations, and closed in the centre of the lists, with the same speed, the same dexterity, the same violence, but not the same equal fortune as before.

In this second encounter, the Templar aimed at the centre of his antagonist's shield, and struck it so fair and forcibly that his spear went to shivers, and the Disinherited Knight reeled in his saddle. On the other hand, that champion had, in the beginning of his career, directed the point of his lance towards Bois-Guilbert's shield, but, changing his aim almost in the moment of encounter, he addressed it to the helmet, a mark more difficult to hit, but which, if attained, rendered the shock more irresistible. Fair and true he hit the Norman on the visor, where his lance's point kept hold of the bars. Yet, even at this disadvantage, the Templar sustained his high reputation; and had not the girths of his saddle burst, he might not have been unhorsed. As it chanced, however, saddle, horse and man rolled on the ground under a cloud of dust.

To extricate himself from the stirrups and fallen steed was to the Templar scarce the work of a moment, and, stung with madness, both at his disgrace and at the acclamations with which it was hailed by the spectators, he drew his sword and waved it in defiance of his conqueror. The Disinherited Knight sprung from his steed, and also unsheathed his sword. The marshals of the field, however, spurred their horses between them, and reminded them that the laws of the tournament did not, on the present occasion, permit this species of encounter.

Genuine humour being rather a leaven pervading the whole mass, than, like wit, a sweetmeat giving flavour to a separate morsel, cannot possibly be done justice to by brief quotations. But that in this quality of genius Scott was little inferior even to those of his predecessors in whom it was the predominating excellence is sufficiently attested by his lifelike pictures of the Old Baron of Bradwardine, of the Antiquary, of Dalgetty, of Caleb Balderstone, and (to give the place of honour to the Sovereign) of King James. One quality of his intellect remains to be spoken of. The power of awakening the tenderer emotions, of exciting sympathy for affliction, has always been reckoned among the most unquestionable proofs of the highest order of

genius. In that exertion of it, as in the portrayal of beauty, the poet again has a manifest advantage. Yet it would be hard to find in the most plaintive verse truer and more moving pathos than is presented in the following pictures of female distress: when Flora is anticipating her brother's death on the scaffold, and torturing herself with the reflection that she herself had done much to urge him on in the career which had led him to such an end; and when the humbler fisherman and his wife bewail their son, who has been taken from them by one of those disasters to which their adventurous way of life on our storm-beaten coasts renders them peculiarly liable.

(Waverley, vol. ii. ch. xxxix.)

When Edward reached Miss Mac-Ivor's present place of abode, he was instantly admitted. In a large and gloomy tapestried apartment, Flora was seated by a latticed window, sewing what seemed to be a piece of white flannel. At a little distance sat an elderly woman, apparently a foreigner, and of a religious order. She was reading in a book of Catholic devotion; but when Waverley entered, laid it on the table, and left the room. Flora rose to receive him, and stretched out her hand, but neither ventured to attempt speech. Her fine complexion was totally gone, her person considerably emaciated, and her face and hands as white as the purest statuary marble, forming a strong contrast with her sable dress and jet-black hair. Yet amid these marks of distress, there was nothing negligent or ill-arranged about her attire, even her hair, though totally without ornament, was disposed with her usual attention to neatness. The first words she uttered were, 'Have you seen him?'

'Alas, no!' answered Waverley, 'I have been refused admittance.'

'It accords with the rest,' she said, 'but we must submit. Shall you obtain leave, do you suppose?'

'For—for to-morrow,' said Waverley; but muttering the last word so faintly that it was almost unintelligible.

'Ay, then or never,' said Flora, 'until,' she added, looking upward, 'the time when, I trust, we shall all meet. But I hope you will see him while earth yet bears him. He always loved you at his heart, though—but it is vain to talk of the past.'

'Vain indeed!' echoed Waverley.

'Or even of the future, my good friend,' said Flora, 'so far as earthly events are concerned; for how often have I pictured to

myself the strong possibility of this horrid issue, and tasked myself to consider how I could support my part; and yet how far has all my anticipation fallen short of the unimaginable bitterness of this hour?'

'Dear Flora, if your strength of mind——'

'Ay, there it is,' she answered, somewhat wildly; 'there is, Mr. Waverley, there is a busy devil at my heart, that whispers—but it were madness to listen to it—that the strength of mind on which Flora prided herself has murdered her brother.'

'Good God! how can you give utterance to a thought so shocking.'

'Ay, is it not so? but yet it haunts me like a phantom; I know it is unsubstantial and vain; but it will be present, will intrude its horrors on my mind, will whisper that my brother, as volatile as ardent, would have divided his energies amid a hundred objects. It was I who taught him to concentrate them, and to gage all on this dreadful and desperate cast. Oh that I could recollect that I had but once said to him, 'He that striketh with the sword shall die by the sword,' that I had but once said, Remain at home, reserve yourself, your vassals, your life, for enterprises within the reach of man. But O, Mr. Waverley, I spurred his fiery temper, and half of his ruin at least lies with his sister.'

The horrid idea which she had intimated, Edward endeavoured to combat by every incoherent argument that occurred to him. He recalled to her the principles on which both thought it their duty to act, and in which they had been educated.

'Do not think I have forgotten them,' she said, looking up with eager quickness; 'I do not regret his attempt because it was wrong! Oh no! on that point I am armed; but because it was impossible it could end otherwise than thus.'

'Yet it did not always seem so desperate and hazardous as it was; and it would have been chosen by the bold spirit of Fergus, whether you had approved it or no; your counsels only served to give unity and consistence to his conduct, to dignify, but not to precipitate, his resolution.' Flora had soon ceased to listen to Edward, and was again intent upon her needlework.

'Do you remember,' she said, looking up with a ghastly smile, 'you once found me making Fergus's bride-favours, and now I am sewing his bridal garment. Our friends here,' she continued, with suppressed emotion, 'are to give hallowed earth in their chapel to the bloody relics of the last Vich Ian Vohr. But they will not all rest together; no—his head!—I shall not have the last miserable consolation of kissing the cold lips of my dear, dear, Fergus!'

The unfortunate Flora here, after one or two hysterical sobs, fainted in her chair.

There is perhaps even a deeper pathos in the grief of the old fisherman and his wife for their son, lost by one of those accidents to which fishermen are so exposed that, as one of the old ballads describes it,

Wives and mothers, most despairing,
Call them (*fish*) lives of men.

There is no self-reproach in their lamentation, as in that of the unhappy Flora. But the grief is hardly the less poignant; while, so unerringly true is the novelist's judgment, that it is in no respect overdrawn.

(The Antiquary, vol. ii. ch. x.)

The body was laid in its coffin within the wooden bedstead which the young fisher had occupied while alive. At a little distance stood the father, whose rugged weather-beaten countenance, shaded by his grizzled hair, had faced many a stormy night and night-like day. He was apparently revolving his loss in his mind with that strong feeling of painful grief peculiar to harsh and rough characters, which almost breaks forth into hatred against the world, and all that remain in it, after the beloved object is withdrawn. The old man had made the most desperate efforts to save his son, and had only been withheld by main force from renewing them at a moment when, without the possibility of assisting the sufferer, he must himself have perished. All this apparently was boiling in his recollection. His glance was directed sidelong towards the coffin, as to an object on which he could not steadfastly look, and yet from which he could not withdraw his eyes. His answers to the necessary questions which were occasionally put to him were brief, harsh, and almost fierce. His family had not yet dared to address to him a word, either of sympathy or consolation. His masculine wife, virago as she was, and absolute mistress of the family as she justly boasted herself, on all ordinary occasions, was, by this great loss, terrified into silence and submission, and compelled to hide from her husband's observation the bursts of her female sorrow. As he had rejected food ever since the disaster had happened, not daring herself to approach him, she had that morning, with affectionate artifice, employed the youngest and favourite child to present her husband with some nourishment. His first action was to push it from him with an angry violence that frightened the child; his next to

snatch up the boy and devour him with kisses. 'Ye'll be a bra' fallow, an ye be spared, Patie—but ye'll never—never can be, what he was to me! He has sailed the coble wi' me since he was ten years auld, and there wasna the like o' him drew a net betwixt this and Buchan-ness. They say folks maun submit. I will try.'

. . . . . .

Mr. Blattergowl had no sooner entered the hut, and received the mute and melancholy salutations of the company whom it contained, than he edged himself towards the unfortunate father, and seemed to endeavour to slide in a few words of condolence or of consolation. But the old man was incapable as yet of receiving either; he nodded, however, gruffly, and shook the clergyman's hand in acknowledgement of his good intentions, but was either unable or unwilling to make any verbal reply.

The minister next passed to the mother, moving along the floor as slowly, silently, and gradually as if he had been afraid that the ground would, like unsafe ice, break beneath his feet, or that the first echo of a footstep was to dissolve some magic spell, and plunge the hut with all its inmates into a subterranean abyss. The tenour of what he said to the poor woman could only be judged by her answers, as, half stifled by sobs ill-repressed, and by the covering which she still kept over her countenance, she faintly answered at each pause in his speech, 'Yes, sir, yes! Ye're very gude, ye're very gude! Nae doubt, nae doubt! It's our duty to submit! But, oh dear, my poor Steenie, the pride o' my very heart, that was sae handsome and comely, and a help to his family, and a comfort to us a', and a pleasure to a' that lookit on him. O my bairn, my bairn, my bairn! what for is thou lying there, and eh! what for am I left to greet for ye!'

MISS EDGEWORTH.

A.D. 1766–1849.

SCOTT himself has recorded that it was 'the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters had gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland,'[1] that especially excited him to attempt something similar 'for his own country.' And, though it may be that he somewhat exaggerates the influence which her example had on him (for Waverley had been begun before the

[1] General Preface to the Waverley Novels, p. xiii.

appearance of any of her best works), yet anyone who contributed in ever so light a degree to the production of his immortal works has a standing claim on the gratitude of all readers. Miss Edgeworth, however, is not reduced to rely for our good-will on the genius of another: her own powers were of a very high class. Her admirer, who in process of time became a personal friend, speaks of her 'rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact.' And these are qualities which, as has been already said, stand high among those which give enduring popularity to a writer of prose fiction.

The life of a lady can seldom supply copious materials for a biographer. She was the daughter of a gentleman of good family residing at Edgeworthtown in the county of Longford, but was born near Oxford in the year 1765 or 1766; her father, who was then an undergraduate in the University, having, in 1764, succeeded in persuading a young lady of the neighbourhood, a Miss Elers, to elope with him to Gretna Green. He himself was a man of some literary and scientific talent, and the first work which she published, an 'Essay on Irish Bulls,' was partly his composition. She was nearly forty when she first appeared as a novelist; but when she had once entered that career she pursued it with great diligence for thirty years, one of her novels, 'Patronage' extending to four stout volumes, but the greater portion of them not reaching half that length. She preferred publishing shorter stories in sets, such as 'Popular Tales,' 'Tales of Fashionable Life,' in two series; and some of these are deservedly reckoned her masterpieces. In all she displays great fertility of invention, lively dramatic power, and entire originality, all these qualities being under the government of strong common sense and uniformly correct feeling and high principle. She died in 1849.

Her scenes are not always laid in Ireland; but her powers are certainly shown to the greatest advantage when employed in the delineation of Irish character. When she published her second series of 'Tales of Fashionable Life,' in 1812, the evils of absenteeism were as rife as ever. And they are powerfully and truthfully depicted in 'The Absentee.' Lord Clonbrony is the absentee, who lives in a fine

house in London, trusting the management of his Irish estate to a Mr. Nicholas Garraghty, known among the tenantry as old Nick, who, aided by his brother Dennis, conducts it in such a manner that the only question which can be raised is whether the landlord or the tenant suffers most from their dishonesty and cruelty. Lord Clonbrony has a son, Lord Colambre, just on the point of coming of age; a young man of high principles and humanity, who is spending a long vacation in travelling incognito through the Clonbrony estates. He arrives in the town of Clonbrony on the day before the rent-day: when the first thing he sees is the agent's agent selling to the tenants, at an exorbitant price, the gold in which alone the rent will be received on the morrow.

(The Absentee, ch. xi.)

Lord Colambre followed the crowd into a public-house, where a new scene presented itself to his view.

The man to whom St. Denis gave the bag of gold was now selling this very gold to the tenants, who were to pay their rent next day at the Castle.

The agent would take nothing but gold. The same guineas were bought and sold several times over, to the great profit of the agent, and loss of the poor tenants; for, as the rents were paid, the guineas were resold to another set, and the remittances made through bankers to the landlord, who, as the poor man that explained the transaction to Lord Colambre expressed it, 'gained nothing by the business bad or good, but the ill-will of the tenantry.'

The higgling for the price of the gold; the time lost in disputing about the goodness of the notes among some poor tenants who could not read or write, and who were at the mercy of the man with the bag in his hand; the vexation, the useless harassing of all, who were obliged to submit ultimately—Lord Colambre saw; and all this time he endured the smell of tobacco and whisky, and the sound of various brogues, the din of men wrangling, brawling, threatening, whining, drawling, cajolling, cursing, and every variety of wretchedness.

. . . . . .

In the kitchen a great dinner was dressing for Mr. Garraghty's friends, who were to make merry with him when the business of the day was over.

'Where's the keys of the cellar, till I get out the claret for

after dinner,' says one; 'and the wine, for the cook; sure there's venison,' cries another. 'Venison! that's the way my lord's deer goes,' says a third, laughing. 'Ay, sure! and very proper, when he's not here to eat 'em.' 'Keep your nose out of the kitchen, young man, if you plase,' said the agent's cook, shutting the door in Lord Colambre's face. 'There's the way to the office, if you've money to pay—up the back stairs.'

'No; up the grand staircase they must, Mr. Garraghty ordered,' said the footman. 'because the office is damp for him, and it's not there he'll see anybody to-day, but in my lady's dressing-room.'

'In the presence-chamber,' replied another; 'where should the viceroy be, but in the presence-chamber?'

There was a full levee, and fine smell of great coats. 'Oh! would you put your hats on the silk cushions?' said the widow to some men in the doorway, who were throwing off their greasy hats on a damask sofa.

'Why not? where else?'

'If the lady was in it you wouldn't,' said she, sighing.

'No, to be sure, I wouldn't; great news! would I make no differ in the presence of Old Nick and my lady?' said he, in Irish. 'Have I no sense or manners, good woman, think ye?' added he, as he shook the ink out of the pen on the Wilton carpet, when he had finished signing his name to a paper on his knee.

'You may wait long before you get to the speech of the great man,' said another, who was working his way through numbers.

They continued pushing forward, till they came within sight of Mr. Nicholas Garraghty, seated in state; and a worse countenance, or a more perfect picture of an insolent petty tyrant in office, Lord Colambre had never beheld.

'Oh, Mr. Dennis, I'm glad to see you as kind as your promise, meeting me here,' said the widow O'Neil, walking up to him. 'I'm sure you'll speak a good word for me—here's the lases—who will I offer this to?' said she, holding the glove-money and sealing-money, 'for I'm strange and ashamed.'

'Oh, don't be ashamed, there's no strangeness in bringing money or taking it,' said Mr. Nicholas Garraghty, holding out his hand; 'Is this the proper compliment?'

'I hope so, sir; your honour knows best.'

'Very well,' slipping it into his private purse. 'Now, what's your business?'

'The lases to sign—the rent's all paid up.'

Leases! Why, woman, is the possession given up?'

'It was, plase your honour; and Mr. Dennis has the key of our little place in his pocket.'

'Then I hope he'll keep it there. *Your* little place—it's no longer yours. I've promised it to the surveyor. You don't think I'm such a fool as to renew to you at this rent.'

'Mr. Dennis named the rent—but anything your honour plases—anything at all that we can pay.'

'Oh, it's out of the question—put it out of your head. No rent you can offer would do, for I have promised it to the surveyor.'

'Sir, Mr. Dennis knows my lord gave us his promise in writing of a renewal, on the back of the ould lase.'

'Produce it.'

'Here's the lase, but the promise is rubbed out.

'Nonsense! coming to me with a promise that's rubbed out. Who'll listen to that in a court of justice, do you think?'

'I don't know, plase your honour; but this I'm sure of, my lord and Miss Nugent, though but a child at the time, God bless her, who was by when my lord wrote it with his pencil, will remember it.'

'Miss Nugent! what can she know of business? What has she to do with the management of my Lord Clonbrony's estate, pray?'

'Management! no, sir.'

'Do you wish to get Miss Nugent turned out of the house?'

'Oh, God forbid! how could that be?'

'Very easily; if you set about to make her meddle and witness in what my lord does not choose.'

'Well, then, I'll never mention Miss Nugent's name again in it at all, if it was ever so with me. But be plased, sir, to write over to my lord, and ask him; I'm sure he'll remember it.'

'Write to my lord about such a trifle—trouble him about such nonsense.'

'I'd be sorry to trouble him. Then take it on my word, and believe me, sir; for I would not tell a lie, nor cheat rich or poor, if in my power, for the whole estate nor the whole world; for there's an eye above.'

'Cant! nonsense! Take those leases off the table; I never will sign them. Walk off, ye canting hag! it's an imposition—I will never sign them.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MARRYAT.

A.D. 1786–1848.

IT would have been unnatural if, in an age so devoted to novels as the last half century, when almost every condition of life has found its separate delineators, and the shelves of the circulating libraries groan under rustic novels, fashionable novels, military and even legal novels, the Queen of the Seas had not produced writers to celebrate her deeds on her own element, and to portray the peculiar character of the British sailor. And thus, before the excitement caused by the great deeds of Nelson and his brethren in arms had died away, a number of naval novels was added to the list, the most eminent artist in that line being a naval officer who had himself served against the French in the great revolutionary war.

Captain Frederick Marryat, who was born in 1786, had learnt his profession under one of the most brilliant and renowned of the naval heroes of the great war, being one of Lord Cochrane's midshipmen in the 'Impérieuse.' And, as commander of the twenty-gun sloop 'Larne,' and of a squadron of smaller vessels in the first Burmese war, he showed how much he had caught of the spirit of that great commander when he took the squadron up the Rangoon river; silenced the stockades which the guns of the land force could not reach, and mainly contributed to the success which crowned the expedition. For his services in that war he was deservedly promoted, and rewarded with a good-service pension and the riband of a C.B. And on

his return to England he applied himself to the grateful task of giving his countrymen an idea of the true nature of the service of which he was so bright an ornament. Smollett had introduced a former generation to naval scenes and characters, but had given a notion of the service calculated only to disgust and repel. It is to be hoped that he exaggerated its miseries; but, at all events, the spirit of Rodney and Nelson had purified the service since his day, and a ship in the reign of George IV. was a very different thing from one in the days of his great grandfather; and Marryat presents us its best side, though too keen-sighted to be ignorant that there were still evils which might be amended, too honest to conceal them, and sensible that the best way to lead to their extinction was to expose them. His humour may not be quite equal to that of the author of 'Roderick Random,' but is surpassed by that of few of his contemporaries, and he is wholly free from the grossness which offends us in the pages of the elder novelist. He died in 1848, having enriched our literature with several tales, of which at least two, 'Peter Simple' and 'Midshipman Easy,' are of the highest excellence in their line.

The following extract from 'Peter Simple' is an embodiment of an exploit really performed, in the winter of 1812, by Captain Hayes, who, in a terrible storm which caught the 'Magnificent' at the entrance of the Basque Roads,[1] saved her by a manœuvre such as is here, with some slight variation, attributed to the captain of the 'Diomede.' And it has never been more desirable to dwell upon such examples of what may be done and what has been done by courage and seamanship in old times than at the present day, when there is too great reason to believe that the reliance on steam is leading our young officers to relax their attention to the strict principles of naval science and the rules of their noble profession. The storm too, in its effects on a ship exposed to its violence, is described with great power.

[1] See the author's 'History of the British Navy,' ch. xxxv.

(Peter Simple.)

It really was a very awful sight. When the ship was in the trough of the sea, you could distinguish nothing but a waste of tumultuous water; but when she was borne up on the summit of the enormous waves, you then looked down, as it were, upon a low, sandy coast, close to you, and covered with foam and breakers. 'She behaves nobly,' observed the captain, stepping aft to the binnacle, and looking at the compass; 'if the wind does not baffle us, we shall weather.' The captain had scarcely time to make the observation, when the sails shivered and flapped like thunder. 'Up with the helm; what are you about, quartermaster?'

'The wind has headed us, sir,' replied the quartermaster, coolly.

The captain and master remained at the binnacle, watching the compass: and when the sails were again full, she had broken off two points, and the point of land was only a little on the lee-bow.

'We must wear her round, Mr. Falcon. Hands, wear ship—ready, oh, ready.'

'She has come up again,' cried the master, who was at the binnacle.

'Hold fast there a minute. How's her head, now?'

'N.N.E., as she was before she broke off, sir.'

'Pipe belay,' said the captain. Falcon,' continued he, 'if she breaks off again we may have no room to wear; indeed there is so little room now that I must run the risk. Which cable was ranged last night—the best bower?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Jump down, then, and see it double-bitted and stoppered at thirty fathoms. See it well done; our lives may depend upon it.

The ship continued to hold her course good, and we were within half a mile of the point, and fully expected to weather it, when again the wet and heavy sails flapped in the wind, and the ship broke off two points as before. The officers and seamen were aghast, for the ship's head was right on to the breakers.

'Luff now, all you can, quartermaster,' cried the captain. 'Send the men aft directly. My lads, there is no time for words—I am going to club-haul the ship, for there is no room to wear. The only chance you have of safety is to be cool, to watch my eye, and to execute my orders with precision. Away to your stations for tacking ship. Hands by the best bower anchor. Mr. Wilson, attend below, with the carpenter and his mates, ready to cut away the cable at the moment that I give the order. Silence there, fore and aft. Quartermaster, keep her full again for stays. Mind you

ease the helm down when I tell you.' About a minute passed before the captain gave any further orders. The ship had closed-to within a quarter of a mile of the beach, and the waves curled and topped around us, bearing us down upon the shore, which presented one continued surface of foam, extending to within half a cable's length of our position, at which distance the enormous waves culminated and fell with the report of thunder. The captain waved his hand in silence to the quartermaster at the wheel, and the helm was put down. The ship turned slowly to the wind, pitching and chopping as the sails were spilling. When she had lost her way, the captain gave the order, 'Let go the anchor. We will haul all at once, Mr. Falcon,' said the captain. Not a word was spoken, the men went to the fore-brace, which had not been manned; most of them knew, although I did not, that if the ship's head did not go round the other way, we should be on shore and among the breakers in half a minute. I thought at the time that the captain had said that he would haul all the yards at once; there appeared to be doubt or dissent on the countenance of Mr. Falcon; and I was afterwards told that he had not agreed with the captain, but he was too good an officer, and knew that there was no time for discussion, to make any remark; and the event proved that the captain was right. At last the ship was head to wind, and the captain gave the signal. The yards flew round with such a creaking noise, that I thought the masts had gone over the side, and the next moment the wind had caught the sails, and the ship, which for a moment or two had been on an even keel, careened over to her gunnel with its force. The captain, who stood upon the weather hammock rails, holding by the main rigging, ordered the helm a-midships, looked full at the sails, and then at the cable, which grew broad upon the weather bow, and held the ship from nearing the shore. At last he cried, 'Cut away the cable.' A few strokes of the axes were heard, and then the cable flew out of the hawse-hole in a blaze of fire, from the violence of the friction, and disappeared under a huge wave, which struck us on the chess-tree, and deluged us with water fore and aft. But we were now on the other tack, and the ship regained her way, and we had evidently increased our distance from the land.

'My lads,' said the captain to the ship's company, 'you have behaved well, and I thank you; but I must tell you honestly, that we have more difficulties to get through. We have to weather a point of the bay on this tack. Mr. Falcon, splice the main-brace, and call the watch. How's her head, quartermaster?'

'S.W. by S. Southerly, sir.'

'Very well; let her go through the water.'

But though the immediate danger is past, there is still a rocky headland before them which it is very doubtful whether in such a gale they will be able to weather. It is a danger from which nothing but the most perfect seamanship, the quickest presence of mind, and the most unfaltering nerve can save them. But few have been those of our sailors, whether in the great war, or in after times, to whom these qualities have been wanting, and they now save both crew and ship.

Before twelve o'clock, the rocky point which we so much dreaded was in sight, broad on the lee bow; and if the low, sandy coast appeared terrible, how much more did this, even at a distance, the black masses of rock covered with foam, which each minute dashed up in the air higher than our lower mastheads. The captain eyed it for some minutes in silence, as if in calculation.

'Mr. Falcon,' said he at last, 'we must put the mainsail on her.

'She never can bear it, sir.'

'She must bear it,' was the reply. 'Send the men aft to the mainsheet. See that careful men attend the buntlines.'

The mainsail was set, and the effect of it upon the ship was tremendous. She careened over so that her lee channels were under the water, and when pressed by a sea, the lee side of the quarterdeck and gangway were afloat. She now reminded me of a goaded and fiery horse, mad with the stimulus applied; not rising as before, but forcing herself through whole seas, and dividing the waves, which poured in one continual torrent from the forecastle down upon the decks below. Four men were secured to the wheel—the sailors were obliged to cling, to prevent being washed away—the ropes were thrown in confusion to leeward, the shot rolled out of the lockers, and every eye was fixed aloft, watching the masts, which were expected every moment to go over the side. A heavy sea struck us on the broadside, and it was some moments before the ship appeared to recover herself: she reeled, trembled, and stopped her way, as if it had stupefied her. The first lieutenant looked at the captain, as if to say, 'This will not do.' 'It is our only chance,' answered the captain to the appeal. That the ship went faster through the water, and held a better wind, was certain; but just before we arrived at the point the gale increased in force. 'If anything starts, we are lost, sir,' observed the first lieutenant again.

'I am perfectly aware of it,' replied the captain, in a calm tone,

'but as I said before, and you must now be aware, it is our only chance. The consequence of any carelessness or neglect in the fitting and securing of the rigging will be felt now; and this danger, if we escape it, ought to remind us how much we have to answer for if we neglect our duty. The lives of a whole ship's company may be sacrificed by the neglect or incompetence of an officer when in harbour. I will pay you the compliment, Falcon, to say, that I feel convinced that the masts of this ship are as secure as knowledge and attention can make them.'

The first lieutenant thanked the captain for his good opinion, and hoped it would not be the last compliment which he paid him.

'I hope not too: but a few minutes will decide the point.'

The ship was now within two cable's length of the rocky point; some few of the men I observed to clasp their hands, but most of them were silently taking off their jackets, and kicking off their shoes, that they might not lose a chance of escape provided the ship struck.

''Twill be touch and go indeed, Falcon,' observed the captain (for I had clung to the belaying-pins, close to them, for the last half-hour that the mainsail had been set). Come aft, you and I must take the helm. We shall want nerve, there, and only there, now.'

The captain and first lieutenant went aft, and took the fore spokes of the wheel, and O'Brien, at a sign made from the captain, laid hold of the spokes behind him. An old quartermaster kept his station at the fourth. The roaring of the seas on the rocks with the howling of the wind, was dreadful; but the sight was more dreadful than the noise. For a few moments I shut my eyes, but anxiety forced me to open them again. As near as I could judge, we were not twenty yards from the rocks at the time that the ship passed abreast of them. We were in the midst of the foam, which boiled around us, and as the ship was driven nearer to them, and careened with the wave, I thought that our main-yard-arm would have touched the rock; and at this moment a gust of wind came on, which laid the ship on her beam-ends and checked her progress through the water, while the accumulated noise was deafening. A few moments more the ship dragged on, another wave dashed over her, and spent itself upon the rocks, while the spray was dashed back from them, and returned upon the decks. The main rock was within ten yards of her counter when another gust of wind laid us on our beam-ends, the foresail and mainsail split, and were blown clean out of the bolt-ropes—the ship righted, trembling fore and aft. I looked astern—the rocks were to windward on our quarter, and we were safe.

COOPER.

A.D. 1789–1851.

IN a former chapter we have seen how valuable have been the contributions which the scholars of the United States have made (as they are still making them) to our historical literature. More than one of these writers have also won an enduring reputation as novelists, and one of their number has struck out a peculiar line for himself as the delineator of the habits of the natives of the North American continent, whose character he has had the skill to render as attractive to European as to American readers.

James Fenimore Cooper, the son of an eminent barrister who afterwards was promoted to the Bench, was born in New Jersey in 1789. In indulgence to his own boyish fancy and love of adventure, his father, when he was sixteen, placed him in the American navy; but he did not continue in that profession more than five years, as the death of his father had left him a fair inheritance, on which, at the end of 1810, he took up his residence. He married and lived as a country gentleman for several years; till, in 1821, becoming ambitious of a wider notoriety, and feeling a consciousness of great talents, he came before the world as the author of a novel called 'The Spy,' founded on an incident supposed to have happened in the great revolution which established the independence of his country. Few first works have been equally successful, either in America or in England. It introduced the reader to new scenery, and characters which no previous writer had ever endeavoured to portray, and which yet were treated with a vigour and decision of touch, with a clearness and consistency, which bore the impress of truth, and rivetted the interest of the reader. The warmth of the praise which was unanimously bestowed on it naturally prompted a repetition of the effort; and for nearly thirty years, till his death in 1851, he poured forth tale after tale with a fertility equal to that of Scott himself. Several took the same ground as 'The Spy,' deriving their interest chiefly from the portraiture of

the characters of the native tribes. Some were naval novels, full, like the others, of spirit and animation, but less attractive, as illustrating a less novel subject. An English critic can hardly know which are held in the greatest esteem among his own countrymen; but among English readers 'The Last of the Mohicans' is considered his masterpiece, and it is from that, therefore, that I shall subjoin an extract.

In the war between the English and French in North America, the native tribes took different sides, as our author himself explains it.

(Last of the Mohicans, ch. xix.)

The confusion of nations, and even of tribes, to which Hawk-eye alluded, existed at that period in the fullest force. The great tie of language, and, of course, of a common origin, was severed in many places; and it was one of its consequences that the Delaware and the Mingo (as the people of the Six Nations were called) were found fighting in the same ranks, while the latter sought the scalp of the Huron, though believed to be the root of his own stock. The Delawares were even divided among themselves. Though love for the soil which had belonged to his ancestors kept the Sagamore of the Mohicans with a small band of followers who were serving at Edward, under the banners of the English king, by far the largest portion of his nation were known to be in the field as allies of Montcalm. The reader probably knows, if enough has not already been gleaned from this narrative, that the Delaware, or Lenape, claimed to be the progenitors of that numerous people, who once were masters of most of the eastern and northern States of America, of whom the community of the Mohicans was an ancient and highly honoured member.

And the plot of 'The Last of the Mohicans' turns on the danger incurred by two English ladies, relations of some of General Wolfe's officers. They are guided by a chief of the Mohicans, an offshoot of the great family of the Delaware Indians; and are beset by the Hurons, a tribe acting in concert with the French under the Marquis of Montcalm. The following extract shows the sincerity of the writer's admiration for many features of the Indian character; and without a sincere feeling there cannot be powerful writing.

Left now in a measure to themselves, the Mohicans, whose time had been so much devoted to the interests of others, seized the moment to devote some attention to themselves. Casting off, at once, the grave and austere demeanour of an Indian chief, Chingachgook commenced speaking to his son in the soft and playful tones of affection. Uncas gladly met the familiar air of his father; and before the hard breathing of the scout announced that he slept, a complete change was effected in the manner of his two associates.

It is impossible to describe the music of their language, while thus engaged in laughter and endearments, in such a way as to render it intelligible to those whose ears have never listened to its melody. The compass of their voices, particularly that of the youth, was wonderful—extending from the deepest bass to tones that were even feminine in softness. The eyes of the father followed the plastic and ingenious movements of the son with open delight, and he never failed to smile in reply to the other's contagious but low laughter. While under the influence of these gentle and natural feelings, no trace of ferocity was to be seen in the softened features of the Sagamore. His figured panoply of death looked more like a disguise assumed in mockery, than a fierce annunciation of a desire to carry destruction and desolation in his footsteps.

After an hour passed in the indulgence of their better feelings, Chingachgook abruptly announced his desire to sleep, by wrapping his head in his blanket, and stretching his form on the naked earth. The merriment of Uncas instantly ceased; and carefully raking the coals in such a manner that they should impart their warmth to his father's feet, the youth sought his own pillow among the ruins of the place.

Imbibing renewed confidence from the security of these experienced foresters, Heyward soon imitated their example; and long before the night had turned, they who lay in the bosom of the ruined work, seemed to slumber as heavily as the unconscious multitude whose bones were already beginning to bleach on the surrounding plain.

The ladies fall into the power of Magua, the most treacherous of the Huron chiefs; and their father, aided by the Mohican chief or Sagamore Chingachgook and his son Uncas, and by a British hunter who has lived so long among the natives as in a great degree to have acquired their feelings and habits, pursues them, tracking them through the pathless forests by signs which to any other eye would have been absolutely invisible; but which the

hunter, or scout, as he is called in the novel, Hawk-eye, pronounces to be clear as a printed book. Our last extract relates one incident in the chase.

Hawk-eye and the Mohicans now applied themselves to their task in good earnest. A circle of a few hundred feet in circumference was drawn, and each of the party took a segment for his portion. The examination, however, resulted in no discovery. The impressions of footsteps were numerous, but they all appeared like those of men who had wandered about the spot without any design to quit it. Again the scout and his companions made the circuit of the halting-place, each slowly following the other, until they assembled in the centre once more, no wiser than when they started.

'Such cunning is not without its deviltry,' exclaimed Hawk-eye, when he met the disappointed looks of his assistants.

'We must get down to it, Sagamore, beginning at the spring and going over the ground by inches. The Huron shall never brag in his tribe that he has a foot which leaves no print.'

Setting the example himself, the scout engaged in the scrutiny with renewed zeal. Not a leaf was left unturned. The sticks were removed, and the stones lifted—for Indian cunning was known frequently to adopt these objects as covers, labouring with the utmost patience and industry to conceal each footstep as they proceeded. Still no discovery was made. At length Uncas, whose activity had enabled him to achieve his portion of the task the soonest, raked the earth across the turbid little rill which ran from the spring, and diverted its course into another channel. So soon as its narrow bed below the dam was dry, he stooped over it with keen and curious eyes. A cry of exultation immediately announced the success of the young warrior. The whole party crowded to the spot, where Uncas pointed out the impression of a moccasin in the moist alluvion.

'The lad will be an honour to his people,' said Hawk-eye, regarding the trail with as much admiration as a naturalist would expend on the tusk of a mammoth or the rib of a mastodon; 'ay, and a thorn in the sides of the Hurons. Yet that is not the footstep of an Indian! the weight is too much on the heel, and the toes are squared, as though one of the French dancers had been in, pigeon-winging his tribe! Run back, Uncas, and bring me the size of the singer's foot. You will find a beautiful print of it just opposite yon rock, ag'in the hill side.

While the youth was engaged in this commission, the scout and Chingachgook were attentively considering the impressions.

The measurements agreed, and the former unhesitatingly pronounced that the footstep was that of David, who had, once more, been made to exchange his shoes for moccasins.

'I can now read the whole of it as plainly as if I had seen the arts of Le Subtil,' he added; 'the singer being a man whose gifts lay chiefly in his throat and feet, was made to go first, and the others have trod in his steps, imitating their formation.'

'But,' cried Duncan, 'I see no signs of——'

'The gentle ones,' interrupted the scout; 'the varlet has found a way to carry them, until he supposed he had thrown any followers off the scent. My life upon it, we see their pretty little feet again before many rods go by.'

The whole party now proceeded, following the course of the rill, keeping anxious eyes on the regular impressions. The water soon flowed into its bed again, but, watching the ground on either side, the foresters pursued their way, content with knowing that the trail lay beneath. More than half a mile was passed, before the rill rippled close around the base of an extensive and dry rock. Here they paused to make sure that the Hurons had not quitted the water.

It was fortunate they did so. For the quick and active Uncas soon found the impression of a foot on a bunch of moss, where it would seem an Indian had inadvertently trodden. Pursuing the direction given by this discovery, he entered the neighbouring thicket, and struck the trail, as fresh and obvious as it had been before they reached the spring. Another shout announced the good fortune of the youth to his companions, and at once terminated the search.

DICKENS.

A.D. 1812–1870.

Miss Edgeworth might be looked on, in one sense, as a connecting link between our early novelists and those of the present day. She could read and write before Smollett had passed away; and when she died, two writers, who have only been very recently taken from us, were in possession of the public favour to an extent which no one but Scott has equalled, and may be said in some degree to have divided it, though unquestionably the greater share of it fell for the time to the lot of him who was the earlier in the field, though posterity will probably reverse the decision.

Charles Dickens, born at Portsmouth in 1812, and the son of a Parliamentary reporter for one of the London papers, began his career as a member of the staff of the 'Morning Chronicle;' an employment which gave him opportunities of studying the mode of life and habits of the poorer classes which make up the great mass of the population of the metropolis; and the natural bent of his mind inclining him to note the peculiarities and eccentricities of those whom he met, rather than the nicer shades of ordinary character, he began, about 1834, when he was only twenty-two, to publish sketches of them in the 'Monthly Magazine,' which, when the series was complete, were republished in a collected form, as 'Sketches by Boz,' a *nom de plume*, which he adopted, as he tells us in one of his papers, from the lisping abbreviation of Moses by an infant brother. They were probably not very profitable in themselves, but they led him to fortune. A shrewd London publisher having formed a deservedly high opinion of the talents of a Mr. Seymour, an artist of the school of Cruikshank, conceived the idea of procuring from him a series of engravings which should represent the perils by flood and field of a cockney sportsman; and when Seymour had accepted his offer, he sought the co-operation of the author of 'Sketches by Boz,' to furnish the description or anecdote which should illustrate the pictures. On this hint Boz spoke, or rather wrote. By a most felicitous expansion of the original idea he imagined not an isolated sportsman, but a club of Cockneys, of different ages and inclinations, whose combined adventures would afford of course a greater variety of scenes for both artist and author; and in the spring of 1836 the first number was published of 'The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club.' The mode of publication (for monthly numbers were decided on), however injurious to a regular novel (for many of which the form has since been adopted), as compelling the author to seek to produce some startling incident or sensation in every fresh chapter, was not ill-suited to so miscellaneous and unconnected a publication as this, by its very title, professed to be. The success of the book from the very first was prodigious, and it was greatly increased when, after three or four numbers, Mr. Pickwick's footman, Sam Weller, was

added to the *dramatis personæ*. It was felt that a new humourist had appeared, and a humourist of a new class; new, not so much because he drew his portraits from a rank which previous writers had thought beneath their notice, as because the chief element in the humour was not any sly combination of peculiar qualities or unexpected situations, but the spirit of reckless, unceasing fun:

'Laughter holding both his sides.'

And those who liked to laugh better than anything else, a great majority of the world, hastened to enrol themselves as his admirers. Long before the last number appeared it would have been thought to argue a strange dulness to be ignorant of anything that had happened to Pickwick and Sam. A single book had made Mr. Dickens as famous as 'Childe Harold' had made Byron; and he had nothing to do but to take advantage of his popularity. He was not wanting to his fortune; 'Pickwick' was followed by 'Nicholas Nickleby,' that by 'Oliver Twist;' and for above twenty years a constant succession of tales flowed from his pen, more artistically worked up than 'Pickwick,' with a more regular plot, but all bearing a strong family likeness to it and to one another. They were varied by works of a graver sort. He visited America, and wrote an account of his travels and of the people, which was read on the other side of the Atlantic with less pleasure than on this: he went to Italy, and presently published pictures from Italy, in which the delighted Londoners read that Rome was very like London. For a short time he undertook to edit a newspaper, the 'Daily News;' but his talents were not suited to serious subjects: his tales were more congenial to his taste, and far more profitable, and he speedily returned to them, his popularity rather increasing than diminishing; and being further augmented when he adopted the plan of reading some of the most striking scenes from his different works in public. At last, however, his health gave way, he ceased to write anything more elaborate than Christmas tales, and in the summer of 1870 he died.

The eulogies which had been lavished on him when alive

were not withheld from his memory, and he was loudly lamented in what it is the fashion to call the organs of public opinion, not only as one of the greatest of humourists, but as one who had constantly exerted his great powers for the most philanthropical and beneficent purposes. To the praise of having written with invariable purity, of never having attempted to attract readers by the most distant suggestions of impropriety, he is fully entitled. It is probably rather overstraining his merits when he is further represented as having deliberately designed to bring about a reform of abuses by his writings: to make parish beadles humble and nurses abstemious by the moral drawn from Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Gamp. And even in respect to the quality of his abilities, as developed in his works, the novelty of his style led to his being greatly overpraised. A humourist to be of a high class should have other qualities besides humour. He should have a faculty for appreciating and bringing before us what is noble and beautiful, as well as what is comical. But not only does the strength of Mr. Dickens lie in the observation of eccentricity and folly, and the art of caricaturing even those qualities, but it lies nowhere else. He even makes those characters ridiculous of which he did not design to give us such an idea. He had something of the affection for Mr. Pickwick which Sterne had for Uncle Toby. But how differently does he treat his hero. Uncle Toby is uniformly an object of respect. He has indeed a hobby-horse, and he rides it tolerably hard; but it is a steed which does not misbecome a veteran whose infirmities, contracted in his country's services, have disabled him from active war, and it is bestridden and managed with science and judgment; to all around him he is a perfect gentleman, merry with his brother, sympathetic with Yorick, familiar with the Corporal, as one who has shared his perils, but without ever lowering himself by unseemly condescension. He is one of whom it requires no great stretch of credulity to believe that he may have existed, and whom, if he did not, everyone would wish to have existed. Mr. Dickens seems to have designed to represent a somewhat similar character. He means to give us the idea of Mr. Pickwick, as a man of philanthropy and active benevolence, liberal in

his charity, energetic in his endeavours to expose fraud, with a thorough contempt for humbug and false pretence (even when he detects it among the members of his Club), a British courage to withstand injustice, and a lighthearted courtesy which makes him the delight of the ladies. He has really given us a portrait of an old simpleton whom, if we laugh at him, we are only treating as all around him, friends, acquaintances, and even his servant, treat him also. That his simplicity, whether he enters in his note-book Mr. Jingle's anecdote of his dog, allows himself to be flattened behind the garden-door of a young ladies' academy, or accepts the confidences of the editor of the 'Eatanswill Gazette,' is uniformly diverting, is undeniable; but the feeling which he excites is certainly the reverse of that respect in which, we are assured on the very last page, he is held by the whole neighbourhood. And in all Mr. Dickens's other works the effect which he produces is the same: his cleverness is great, but it is expended on the production of fools and impostors; his insight into human nature is keen, but very limited in its range. He never once attempted to delineate either man or woman the contemplation of whose character can refine or elevate the feelings of the reader: he does indeed on more than one occasion endeavour to be pathetic, but his talents were not formed to draw tears:

> Si vis me flere dolendum est
> Primum ipsi tibi.

His sense of fun is visible through his mask of dolefulness, and the effect he produces on the reader is certainly not that which he appears to desire. It must be added that there is no ill-nature or cynicism in his ridicule: even while caricaturing folly he is more disposed to put a good than a bad interpretation on the character of the fool. This uniform good-nature secures him our good-will. His invariable decorum and propriety (in which it could be wished that his example was more generally followed) entitle him to our esteem, his unfailing liveliness and fun must always awaken our mirth; but, while the fertility of invention with which he presents his characters bids us

rank him very high as an artist in his own line of art, the line is not a high one, and his confinement of his labours to it forbid us to class him with those who, while equally able to ridicule folly, have shown themselves more capable of appreciating and portraying grave integrity, dignity of demeanour, and nobility of character.

A scene from the thirteenth chapter of the 'Pickwick Papers,' relating to the election of a member for the borough of Eatanswill, will give a sufficient idea of the activity of the author's style, while at the same time it is worth preserving as a record, hardly caricatured, of the practices which in 'the good old times when George the Third was king.' periodically turned merry England into a bear-garden.

(The Pickwick Papers.)

The noise and bustle which ushered in the morning were sufficient to dispel from the mind of the most romantic visionary in existence any associations but those which were immediately connected with the rapidly-approaching election. The beating of drums, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the shouting of men, and tramping of horses, echoed and re-echoed through the streets from the earliest dawn of day; and an occasional fight between the light skirmishers of either party at once enlivened the preparations and agreeably diversified their character.

'Well, Sam,' said Mr. Pickwick, as his valet appeared at his bedroom door, just as he was concluding his toilet; 'all alive to-day I suppose?'

'Reg'lar game, sir,' replied Mr. Weller; 'our people's a collecting down at the Town Arms, and they're a hollering themselves hoarse already.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Pickwick, 'do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?'

'Never see such devotion in my life, sir.'

'Energetic, eh!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Uncommon,' replied Sam; 'I never see men eat and drink so much afore; I wonder they a'nt afeer'd o' bustin.'

'That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Werry likely,' replied Sam, briefly.

'Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem,' said Mr. Pickwick, glancing from the window.

'Werry fresh,' replied Sam; 'me, and the two waiters at the Peacock, has been a pumpin' over the independent woters as supped there last night.'

'Pumping over independent voters!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes,' said his attendant, 'every man slept vere he fell down; we dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin' and put 'em under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order, now. Shillin' a head the committee paid for that 'ere job.'

'Can such things be!' exclaimed the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

'Lord bless your heart, sir,' said Sam, 'why where was you half-baptised? that's nothin', that a'n't.'

'Nothing?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Nothin' at all, sir,' replied his attendant. 'The night afore the last day o' the last election here, the opposite party bribed the barmaid at the Town Arms to hocus the brandy and water of fourteen unpolled electors as was a stoppin' in the house.'

'What do you mean by "hocussing" brandy and water?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Puttin' laud'num in it,' replied Sam. 'Blessed if she didn't send 'em all to sleep till twelve hours arter the election was over. They took one man up to the booth in a truck, fast asleep, by way of experiment, but it was no go—they wouldn't poll him; so they brought him back and put him to bed again.'

'Strange practices, these,' said Mr. Pickwick, half-speaking to himself and half-addressing Sam.

'Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election time, in this wery place, sir,' replied Sam.

'What was that?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'Why, he drove a coach down here once,' said Sam; 'Lection time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was a goin' to drive up, committee on t'other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes vith the messenger, who shows him in;—large room, lots of gen'l'm'n, heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. "Ah! Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, "glad to see you, sir, how are you?" "Werry well, thank'ee, sir," says my father, "I hope you're pretty middlin'," says he. "Pretty well, thank'ee, sir," says the gen'l'm'n; "sit down, Mr. Weller—pray sit down, sir." So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks wery hard at each other. "You don't remember me?" says the gen'l'm'n. "Can't say I do," says my father. "Oh, I know you," says the gen'l'm'n; "know'd you ven you was a boy," says he. "Well, I don't remember you," says my father. "That's wery odd," says the gen'l'm'n. "Wery," says my father. "You

must have a bad mem'ry, Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n. "Well, it is a wery bad 'un," says my father. "I thought so," says the gen'l'm'n. So then they pours him out a glass of wine, and gammons him about his driving, and gets him into a reg'lar good humour, and at last shoves a twenty-pound note in his hand. "It's a wery bad road between this and London," says the gen'l'm'n. "Here and there it is a wery heavy road," says my father. "'Specially near the canal, I think," says the gen'l'm'n. "Nasty bit, that 'ere," says my father. "Well, Mr. Weller," says the gen'l'm'n, "you're a wery good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all wery fond o' you, Mr. Weller, so in case you should have an accident when you're a bringin' these here woters down, and should tip 'em over into the canal vithout hurtin' 'em, this is for yourself," says he. "Gen'l'm'n, you're wery kind," says my father, "and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine," says he; vich he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You vould'nt believe, sir,' continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master, 'that on the wery day as he came down with them woters, his coach was upset on that 'ere wery spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal.'

'And got out again?' inquired Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

'Why,' replied Sam, very slowly, 'I rather think one old gentleman was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I a'n't quite certain whether his head was in it or not. But what I look at is the hex-traordinary and wonderful coincidence, that, arter what that gen'l'm'n said, my father's coach should be upset in that wery place, and on that wery day.'

. . . . . .

The stable-yard exhibited unequivocal symptoms of the glory and strength of the Eatanswill Blues. There was a regular army of blue flags, some with one handle, some with two, exhibiting appropriate devices in golden characters four feet high, and stout in proportion. There was a grand band of trumpets, bassoons, and drums, marshalled four abreast, and earning their money if ever men did, especially the drum-beaters, who were very muscular. There were bodies of constables with blue staves, twenty committee men with blue scarfs, and a mob of voters with blue cockades. There were electors on horseback, and electors afoot. There was an open carriage and four for the honourable Samuel Slumkey; and there were four carriages and pair for his friends and supporters; and the flags were rustling, and the band was playing, and the constables were swearing, and the twenty committee men were squabbling, and the mob were shouting, and the horses were backing, and the post boys perspiring; and every-

body and everything then and there assembled was for the special use, behoof, honour, and renown of the honourable Samuel Slumkey of Slumkey Hall, one of the candidates for the representation of the borough of Eatanswill, in the Commons' House of Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Loud and long were the cheers, and mighty was the rustling of one of the blue flags with 'Liberty of the Press' inscribed thereon, when the sandy head of Mr. Pott was discerned in one of the windows by the mob beneath; and tremendous was the enthusiasm when the honourable Samuel Slumkey himself, in top boots and a blue neckerchief, advanced and seized the hand of the said Pott, and melo-dramatically testified by gestures to the crowd his ineffaceable obligations to the 'Eatanswill Gazette.'

'Is everything ready?' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey to Mr. Perker.

'Everything, my dear sir,' was the little man's reply.

'Nothing has been omitted, I hope?' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'Nothing has been left undone, my dear sir, nothing whatever. There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you're to pat on the head, and inquire the age of; be particular about the children, my dear sir, it has always a great effect, that sort of thing.'

'I'll take care,' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'And perhaps, my dear sir,' said the cautious little man, 'perhaps if you could—I don't mean to say it's indispensable—but if you *could* manage to kiss one of 'em, it would produce a very great impression on the crowd.'

'Wouldn't it have as good an effect if the proposer or seconder did that?' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'Why, I'm afraid it wouldn't,' replied the agent; 'if it were done by yourself, my dear sir, I think it would make you very popular.'

'Very well,' said the honourable Samuel Slumkey, with a resigned air, 'then it must be done; that's all.'

THACKERAY.

A.D. 1811–1863.

Mr Thackeray, one year older than his friend Dickens, was several years later in coming before the world as an author. His original inclination indeed was rather for art

than for literature; and, though his circumstances were such as relieved him from the necessity of trusting to his own exertions for a livelihood, he was early known by his friends to cherish the ambition of earning fame as a painter.

He was born in 1811, at Calcutta, where his father held an office in the Civil Service: at five or six years old was sent over to England, and, the ship touching at St. Helena on his way home, saw the great Napoleon walking restlessly about his garden, and was assured by the negro servant who had charge of him that the great Emperor 'ate three sheep every day, and all the children he could lay hands upon.' He was sent to school at the Charterhouse, and became a member of the University of Cambridge as a pensioner of Emmanuel College. Here, however, he did not remain long: the death of his father had left him free to direct his own movements, and he crossed over to Weimar, where his eagerness for study attracted the notice of Goethe.

Before he returned to his own country he had travelled over the greater part of the Continent, and had learnt from the contemplation of the masterpieces of Italian art, to feel less confidence than formerly in his qualifications for shining as an artist. Perhaps too he had acquired a perception of his ability to distinguish himself in a higher line; for, soon after his return to England, he began to try his strength as a writer, at first in articles for magazines, then in one or two brief tales of humorous satire, from occasional touches in which, as well as from their easy vigour, friendly critics predicted future eminence for him. But probably his warmest friends had never anticipated the completeness of the triumphs which were in store for him when, in 1847, he published the first numbers of 'Vanity Fair, a novel without a hero.' The tale may be said to have been in some degre deceptive, for the novel certainly had a heroine, Miss Rebecca, or, as she is profanely but more commonly called, Becky Sharp. No one, however, stopped to criticise the title; it was ackowledged at once to be a great work, not indeed of the very highest class, such as 'Ivanhoe' or 'Woodstock,' but rather of the school of Fielding, and worthy of the master, being

indeed much such a work as he himself, if polished into decorum by the more refined civilization of the nineteenth century, would have written. A second work, 'Pendennis,' kept up the impression produced by the first, though there was now a hero, Pendennis himself, and though his weakness and vanity were hardly as piquant materials as the heartless unscrupulousness of Becky. As if sated with his reputation as a novelist, Thackeray next tried his hand as a critic and lecturer, giving a series of lectures on the English humourists, at Willis's Rooms, as, some years afterwards, he delivered a shorter series on the four Georges. But neither literary nor historical criticism was entirely suited to his genius. And the next year he produced a novel of a perfectly different class, and one showing an entirely different kind of talent, that of transporting himself back to the beginning of the last century, and writing in the spirit which might have animated a contemporary of Addison (for 'Esmond' professes to be an autobiography of one of Anne's officers), and the disguise is maintained throughout with infinite skill. Two years afterwards he produced 'The Newcomes, memoirs of a most respectable family,' which is generally accounted his masterpiece; and which, if less sparkling than 'Vanity Fair,' and less severely testing the artistic skill of the author than 'Esmond,' yet deserves its fame by presenting us, in Colonel Newcome and Ethel, with the most beautiful pictures both of man and woman that he ever drew. His later works are for the most part continuations of those of which we have spoken: 'The Virginians' of 'Esmond,' 'Philip on his Way through the World' of 'The Newcomes.' They all bear the same impress of genius, of that marvellous insight into ordinary life and ordinary characters, which makes them, as a writer in the 'Quarterly Review' has remarked, 'the most minute and faithful transcript of actual life which is anywhere to be found.' Dickens had sought to produce his effects by caricaturing the eccentricities of what has been called the lower middle class: Thackeray undertook the far more difficult task of making an impression by painting faithfully the comparative uniformity of life in the upper middle class, with glimpses of the higher or most

aristocratic of all; and he has succeeded through his sympathy with all alike, and his fine moral sense, which keeps him as fully alive to all that is good and respectable, as well as to all that is base and contemptible, in each. He looked not on any class as wholly or even for the most part, bad; and hardly on any individual. He had too correct a knowledge of human character to paint man or woman thoroughly depraved without one redeeming quality. He knew the rarity of such complete wickedness: there is but one such picture in Shakespeare, but one in Scott.[1] And therefore his greatest rogues have some quality which the reader can look upon at least with indulgence. Even in those who may be called the villains of 'Vanity Fair,' Becky and Rawdon Crawley, his instinctive tact prevented him from representing them as totally bad. Becky herself was, after her lights (it was but a queer light that could be got from her education, fetching gin from a neighbouring public-house for her father and his freeliving comrades, and making them laugh with her mimicry), honestly zealous for her husband's interest; it was more to enable him to live as a highborn gentleman upon nothing that she duped Lord Steyne and cheated Ruggles, than for her own sake; for she would, as she said, have enjoyed herself as much in a spangled frock outside a booth at a fair: and Rawdon, at his very worst, has, as Thackeray points out, the ever-redeeming qualities of a certain manly love for a woman and a child; while, if such characters did not admit of being drawn with equal piquancy, he certainly dwells with more earnestness on the Major and Amelia, and shows that his heart was far more set on making attractive the manly honesty and constancy of the one, the unselfish devotion and purity of the other, than on holding up the great lord to contempt, or the blackleg colonel to reprobation.

In his later novels the pictures of downright evil became gradually fewer, those of what is amiable and admirable proportionably more common. In Pendennis the weakness of the too facile boy is touched off with a hand masterly in its truth; but the author evidently takes far

[1] Iago and Varney.

greater pleasure in displaying the manly vigour of Warrington, bearing contentedly the lot he has made for himself, but ever seeking to keep his friend in the straight path. But if the truest test of excellence in a writer be his skill in delineating pure and highminded women, then, besides Ethel Newcome, who has been already mentioned, the high character of Thackeray's genius is perhaps best displayed in the exquisite picture of the widowed Lady Castlewood. As in the case of the female face, so the delicate lineaments of the mind and character of a virtuous and highminded lady are more difficult to depict than the coarser features of man; and not only has he who successfully overcomes the difficulty always been accounted a master of his art, but it is a mastery which is never attained by anyone who has not himself a deep natural sense of delicacy.

Thackeray's career as an author was briefer than that of Dickens. He was of a herculean appearance, which promised a long life; but in that powerfully built frame lurked an unseen but fatal disease, and on the 24th of December 1863 he died suddenly, of the bursting of a blood-vessel in the brain.

To give an adequate idea of a novel, of a writer's skill in portraying and maintaining character, or inventing a connected narrative, by one or two extracts, is impossible; but quotations, however brief, may convey a notion of an author's style. And the three passages which are subjoined exhibit very different qualities. The first expresses his disdain of the pretentious virtue which is never out of fashion, but for which Thackeray never loses an opportunity of showing his contempt. The second gives a faithful but merciful portrait of a facile vain undergraduate, lured on, as are too many in real life, to his own temporary disgrace, by confidence in talents which are showy rather than solid, and in some degree even by his virtues: his amiability, his frankness, his absence of all design and parasite-like meanness. The third is of a higher stamp: it describes the feelings of a thoroughbred lady, as a mother lamenting the worldliness of her prematurely wise daughter; as a widow breathing her faithful attachment to a civil, worthless husband, who had been killed in a duel. But the sentiments which, in

both characters he puts in my lady's mouth, could not have been conceived by any author who was not himself deeply imbued with feelings at once lofty and tender, who had not himself as chivalrous an appreciation of what is virtuous and noble as other passages of his writings prove him to have had a keen perception of what is false and base.

(Vanity Fair.)

Pitt knew how poor his brother and his brother's family must be. It could not have escaped the notice of such a cool and experienced old diplomatist, that Rawdon's family had nothing to live upon, and that houses and carriages are not to be had for nothing. He knew very well that he was the proprietor or appropriator of the money which, according to all proper calculation, ought to have fallen to his younger brother, and he had, we may be sure, some secret pangs of remorse within him, which warned him that he ought to perform some act of justice, or, let us say, compensation, towards these disappointed relations. A just, decent man, not without brains, who said his prayers, and knew his catechism, and did his duty outwardly through life, he could not be otherwise than aware that something was due to his brother at his hands, and that morally he was Rawdon's debtor.

But, as one reads in the columns of the 'Times' newspaper, every now and then, queer announcements from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, acknowledging the receipt of 50*l.* from A. B. or 10*l.* from W. J., as conscience money, on account of taxes due by the said A. B. or W. J., which payment the penitents beg the Right Honourable gentleman to acknowledge through the medium of the public press; so is the Chancellor no doubt, and the reader likewise, always perfectly sure that the above-named A. B. and W. J. are only paying a very small instalment of what they really owe, and that the man who sends up a twenty-pound note has very likely hundreds of thousands more for which he ought to account. Such, at least, are my feelings when I see A. B. or W. J.'s insufficient acts of repentance. And I have no doubt that Pitt Crawley's contrition, or kindness if you will, towards his younger brother, by whom he had so much profited, was only a very small dividend upon the capital sum in which he was indebted to Rawdon. Not everybody is willing to pay even so much. To part with money is a sacrifice beyond almost all men endowed with a sense of order. There is scarcely any man alive who does not think himself meritorious for giving his neighbour five pounds. Thriftless gives not from a beneficent pleasure in

giving, but from a lazy delight in spending. He would not deny himself one enjoyment: not his opera-stall, not his horse, not his dinner, not even the pleasure of giving Lazarus the five pounds. Thrifty, who is good, wise, and just, and owes no man a penny, turns from a beggar, haggles with a hackney-coachman, or denies a poor relation; and I doubt which is the most selfish of the two. Money has only a different value in the eyes of each.

So, in a word, Pitt Crawley thought he would do something for his brother, and then thought that he would think about it some other time.

(Pendennis.)

Thus young Pen, the only son of an estated country gentleman, with a good allowance, and a gentlemanlike bearing and person, looked to be a lad of much more consequence than he was really; and was held by the Oxbridge authorities, tradesmen, and undergraduates, as quite a young buck and member of the aristocracy. His manner was frank, brave, and perhaps a little impertinent, as becomes a high-spirited youth. He was perfectly generous, and free-handed with his money, which seemed pretty plentiful. He loved joviality, and had a good voice for a song. Boat-racing had not risen in Pen's time to the *fureur* which, as we are given to understand, it has since attained in the University; and riding and tandem-driving were the fashions of the ingenuous youth. Pen rode well to hounds, appeared in pink, as became a young buck, and not particularly extravagant in equestrian or any other amusement, yet managed to run up a fine bill at Nile's, the livery-stable keeper, and in a number of other quarters. In fact, this lucky young gentleman had almost every taste to a considerable degree. He was very fond of books of all sorts: Doctor Portman had taught him to like rare editions, and his own taste led him to like beautiful bindings. It was marvellous what tall copies, and gilding, and marbling, and blind-tooling, the booksellers and binders put upon Pen's bookshelves. He had a very fair taste in matters of art, and a keen relish for prints of a high school—none of your French opera-dancers, or tawdry racing prints, such as had delighted the simple eyes of Mr. Spicer, his predecessor, but your Stranges, and Rembrandt-etchings, and Wilkies before the letters, with which his apartments were furnished presently in the most perfect good taste, as was allowed in the University, where this young fellow got no small reputation. We have mentioned that he exhibited a certain partiality for rings, jewellery, and fine raiment of all sorts; and it must be owned that Mr. Pen, during his time at the University, was rather a dressy man, and loved to

array himself in splendour. He and his polite friends would dress themselves out with as much care in order to go and dine at each other's rooms, as other folks would who were going to enslave a mistress. They said he used to wear rings over his kid gloves, which he always denies; but what follies will not youth perpetrate with its own admirable gravity and simplicity? That he took perfumed baths is a truth; and he used to say that he took them after meeting certain men of a very low set in hall.

In Pen's second year, when Miss Fotheringay made her chief hit in London, and scores of prints were published of her, Pen had one of these hung in his bedroom, and confided to the men of his set how awfully, how wildly, how madly, how passionately, he had loved that woman. He showed them in confidence the verses that he had written to her, and his brow would darken, his eyes roll, his chest heave with emotion, as he recalled that fatal period of his life, and described the woes and agonies which he had suffered. The verses were copied out, handed about, sneered at, admired, passed from coterie to coterie. There are few things which elevate a lad in the estimation of his brother boys more than to have a character for a great and romantic passion. Perhaps there is something noble in it at all times among very young men; it is considered heroic. Pen was pronounced a tremendous fellow; they said he had almost committed suicide, that he had fought a duel with a baronet about her. Fresh men pointed him out to each other. As at the promenade time at two o'clock he swaggered out of college, surrounded by his cronies, he was famous to behold. He was elaborately attired. He would ogle the ladies who came to lionise the University, and passed before him on the arms of happy gownsmen, and give his opinion upon their personal charms, or their toilettes, with the gravity of a critic whose experience entitled him to speak with authority. Men used to say that they had been walking with Pendennis, and were as pleased to be seen in his company as some of us would be if we walked with a duke down Pall Mall. He and the Proctor capped each other as they met, as if they were rival powers, and the men hardly knew which was the greater.

(Esmond.)

'You are such a treasure,' Esmond's mistress was pleased to say, 'that the woman who has your love shouldn't change it away against a kingdom I think. I am a country-bred woman, and cannot say but the ambitions of the town seem mean to me. I never was awe-stricken by my Lady Duchess's rank and finery, or afraid,' she added, with a sly laugh, 'of anything but her temper.

'I hear of court ladies who pine because Her Majesty looks cold on them; and great noblemen who would give a limb that they might wear a garter on the other. This worldliness, which I can't comprehend, was born with Beatrix, who, on the first day of her waiting, was a perfect courtier. We are like sisters, and she the eldest sister, somehow. She tells me I have a mean spirit. I laugh, and say she adores a coach-and-six. I cannot reason her out of her ambition; 'tis natural to her as to me to love quiet, and be indifferent about rank and riches. What are they, Harry? and for how long do they last? our home is not here.' She smiled as she spoke, and looked like an angel that was only on earth on a visit. 'Our home is where the just are, and where our sin and sorrows enter not. My father used to rebuke me, and say that I was too hopeful about heaven. But I cannot help my nature, and grow obstinate as I grow to be an old woman; and as I love my children, so sure our Father loves us with a thousand and a thousand times greater love. It must be that we shall meet yonder and be happy; yes, you, and my children, and my dear lord. Do you know, Harry, since his death, it has always seemed to me as if his love came back to me, and that we are parted no more. Perhaps he is here now, Harry—I think he is. Forgiven I am sure he is: even Mr. Atterbury absolved him, and he died forgiving. Oh, what a noble heart he had! How generous he was! I was but fifteen and a child when he married me. How good he was to stoop to me! He was always good to the poor and humble.' She stopped; then presently, with a peculiar expression, as if her eyes were looking into heaven, and saw my lord there, she smiled, and gave a little laugh. 'I laugh to see you, sir,' she says; 'when you come, it seems as if you never were away.' One may put her words down, and remember them, but how describe her sweet tones, sweeter than music!

APPENDIX.

CHAUCER.

A.D. 1328–1400.

We have said that, for general students, our modern literature may be looked on as commencing in the reign of Elizabeth, since it is in the writers of that period that we first find the English language assume pretty nearly the form which it still retains; but it was mentioned at the same time that one author of a much earlier age had a great reputation, and was even still styled by some critics the father of English poetry; so that it does not seem desirable wholly to pass him over, even though the change which the language has gone through since his time forbids us to allot him a place among those whose compositions should be studied as models by the present generation.

Apart from his literary merits Geoffrey Chaucer was a person of some importance in his day, as being connected with the Royal family, and standing high in the confidence of the King's Government. He was born in 1328; was educated, as is generally believed, at Cambridge; and on arriving at man's estate, like most men of gentle birth at that time, he joined the army with which Edward III. was making such progress in the subjugation of France. In a skirmish a little before the battle of Poictiers he fell into the enemy's hands as a prisoner, but he soon obtained his release, probably at the peace of Bretigny; and on his return home, having attracted the notice of the Duke of Lancaster, more commonly known as John of Gaunt, he married a sister of Catharine Swinford, first the mistress, and afterwards the second wife of that turbulent prince.

Edward himself seems to have regarded him with equal favour, and in 1372 sent him on a diplomatic mission to Genoa; in the discharge of which, an allusion in one of his poems to the celebrated Petrarch is generally understood as implying that he made the acquaintance of that poet, then passing an honoured old age at Padua. Four years later he was employed in France on a more important embassy, which had for its object the negotiation of a marriage for the heir to the throne, the king's grandson, afterwards Richard II., with a French princess. In the first parliament of the new reign he became member for Kent, being now a prosperous man in the receipt of a considerable pension from the Crown, and one or two posts of emolument; but when, a few years afterwards, John of Gaunt fell into disgrace with the Court, he became to some extent involved in his ill fortune, was deprived of his offices, and fled to Holland. In 1389 he was, however, allowed to return to England; but recent occurrences and the approach of old age had given him a distaste for public life; and for the rest of his days he devoted himself to poetical composition, of his talents for which he had already given some proofs in a few short poems, which were mostly translations from foreign originals.

As Boccaccio had imagined a party, fleeing from Florence at the time of the great plague, enlivening their enforced retirement by a relation of pleasant stories: Chaucer, in imitation of this plan, conceived the idea of a number of pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas à-Becket, at Canterbury, forming themselves into one party for mutual protection, and beguiling the way with a succession of narratives. It has been supposed that he did not live to complete his design, since several of the pilgrims have no stories assigned to them, nor is the breaking up of the party described. In the latter years of Richard's reign it has been inferred that he was in indigent circumstances, from the fact of his making frequent applications to the Exchequer for advances on account of his pension, and of the payments on account of it having been frequently received by others; and the belief is confirmed by a 'letter of protection' which he obtained in 1398, and which forbade anyone to arrest him

for two years. The accession of Henry IV. seemed to open to him a prospect of brighter days; as the new king, mindful of the favour with which his father had regarded him, at once doubled his pension; but he was not spared to enjoy the return of prosperity long, since in the next year, 1400, he died.

The metre which Chaucer employs is the ten-syllable couplet, which he seems to have introduced into the language; admitting however, as was not unnatural, some variations, which more modern poets have discarded, so that (to mention one) many of his verses consists of eleven syllables. But the invention or introduction of a new metre does not constitute his highest claim to the admiration which critics in general have expressed for his genius. His latest editor and warmest admirer claims for him such entire originality in the portraits of the different pilgrims, that, as he affirms, 'none of these sketches has ever been traced to a foreign source, and they are so thoroughly national that it is hardly possible to suppose that any imagination but that of an Englishman could have conceived them.' He also claims for him a high degree of dramatic talent, and pronounces the 'Canterbury Tales' 'probably the first instance of unquestionable dramatic genius in either the Gothic or the Romanic languages. . . . Chaucer may fairly be said to be not only the earliest dramatic genius of modern Europe, but to have been a dramatist before that which is technically known as the drama existed.'

Yet he does not, after the fashion of a dramatist, allow his characters to describe themselves by their language and their actions, but himself gives elaborate descriptions of each, in which indeed it is that his art is most displayed; so minutely does he trace the different characters; so profusely does he vary them, aiding our conception of each by a number of minute circumstances.

Beyond their poetic merit the 'Canterbury Tales' are especially valuable as a picture of English life in the fourteenth century. They reveal to us the social life of our ancestors, which no historian of the time thought worth recording; a circumstance which makes it the more unfortunate that the obsoleteness of their diction should

be so great an obstacle to the extension of a knowledge of them.

It is remarkable that Chaucer had no immediate followers, so that Warton compares his poetical existence in such an age to a prematurely warm day in an English spring, after which winter returns, and the birds and blossoms which have been called forth by a transient sunshine are nipped by frosts and storms.

Though his works are sealed up from the ordinary reader by the antiquity of their phraseology, Dryden and Pope were great admirers of them, and in order to render some of the best of them intelligible to their contemporaries they clothed them in a modern dress, 'translating them,' as Dryden says, into modern English. And the specimen which is here subjoined is one of those which Dryden has modernised,[1] in order that the reader may be able to compare his version with the original.

(The Knighte's Tale.)

This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Till it fell oones in a morne of May
That Emilie, that fairer was to seene
Than is the lilie on hire stalkes grene,
And fresscher than the May with floures newe—
For with the rose colour strof hire hewe,
I not which was the fairer of hem two—
Er it was day, as sche was wont to do,
Sche was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wole have no sloggardye a nyght.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
And seith, 'Arys, and do thin observance.'
This maked Emelye hau remembrance,
To do honour to May, and for to ryse,
I-clothed was sche fressh for to devyse.
Hire yolwe heer was browdid in a tresse,
Behynde hire bak, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the gardyn at the sonne upriste
Sche walketh up and doun wher as hire liste.

[1] See *ante*, p. 221.

Sche gadereth floures, party whyte and reede,
To make a sotil gerland for hire heede,
And as an anngel hevenly sche song.

. . . . . .

Why schuld I nought as well telle you alle
The portraiture that was upon the walle
Within the temple of mighty Mars the reede?
Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and breede
Like to the estres of the grisly place,
That hight the grete tempul of Mars in Trace,
In that cold and frosty regioun,
Ther as Mars hath his soveryn mancioun.
First on the wal was peynted a foreste,
In which ther dwellede neyther man ne beste,
With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to byholde;
In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,
As it were a storme schulde berst every bough;
And downward on an hil under a bent,
Ther stood the tempul of Mars armypotent,
Wrought all of burned steel, of which theatre
Was long and streyt, and gastly for to see.
And therout cam a rage of suche a prise,
That it maad al the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore schon,
For window on the walle was ther noon,
Thorugh the which men mighte no light discerne.
The dores were alle ademauntz eterne,
I-clenched overthward and endelong
With iren tough; and, for to make it strong,
Every piler the tempul to susteene
Was tonne greet, of iren bright and scheene.
Ther saugh I furst the derk ymaginyng
Of felony, and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire, as reed as eny gleede;
The pikepurs, and eek the pale drede;
The smyler with the knyf under his cloke;
The schipne brennyng with the blake smoke
The tresoun of the murtheryng in the bed;
The open werres, with woundes al bi-bled;
Contek with bloody knyf, and sharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.

SPENSER.

A.D. 1553–1599.

THE circumstances which prevent our reading Chaucer with that facility which is indispensable to pleasure arise from the time in which he lived. But a poet of far greater genius, who lived within the time which has been adopted in this volume as the age of modern English literature, deliberately chose to place similar obstacles in the way of studying his works by recurring to Chaucer's language, though it had long become obsolete.

Edmund Spenser, who was born in 1553, the son of a gentleman of good family but of small estate, resembled Chaucer in another circumstance also, that he combined attention to public affairs with his cultivation of the Muses. He, too, was educated at Cambridge, and almost from the moment of his leaving the University, began to publish poems, which, as it was the fashion for the nobles of that day to put themselves forward as patrons of learning, introduced him to the acquaintance of those who were able to advance his future. And in 1580 Lord Grey of Wilton, being appointed Lord Deputy in Ireland, took him with him as his secretary, and subsequently procured him a grant of a portion of the estate forfeited for rebellion by the great Earl of Desmond, with Kilcolman Castle for a residence.

Sir Walter Raleigh had obtained a still larger grant in the same district and neighbourhood, leading to an intimacy between the courtly adventurous knight and the poet. In 1590 Raleigh persuaded his friend to accompany him to England, where he presented him to Elizabeth, who accepted the dedication of the 'Faerie Queene,' of which the first three books were just finished. In the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' which had been published in 1579, he had adopted the old language. And he persevered in that course now; while, as if his chief object had been obscurity, he wrapped up his meaning in an elaborate and involved allegory. So conscious, indeed, was he himself that ordinary readers would

find it difficult to penetrate his meaning that he prefixed to his poems a letter to Raleigh, in which he endeavours to explain what he himself calls 'a continued allegory, or dark conceit.' It is even a double allegory; for, to quote his own words, while 'in the Fairy Queen he means *Glory* in his general intention, in his particular he conceives the most excellent and glorious person of our Sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in Fairy Land,' and 'considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful lady, this latter part in some places he does express in Belphœbe.' Other crowned heads, and even parties, are understood to be represented, sometimes in the guise of individuals, sometimes of abstract ideas. Thus the Red Cross Knight means the Church; the Distressed Knight represented Henry IV. of France; and Elizabeth's spleen against the beauteous rival whom she had put to death was gratified by personifying the fair Queen of Scots as Envy. Complicated and hard to follow as such an allegory was, it suited the taste of the time, and was especially grateful to Elizabeth, for whom no flattery was too gross: she rewarded him with a pension, and he returned to Ireland to continue the poem, varying his employment, however, with the composition of several minor works. Three more books of the 'Fairie Queene' were published in 1596. But Ireland was not in those days a residence propitious for a literary student, one of whose first requirements is tranquillity. In 1598 fresh insurrections broke out, and as Spenser was Sheriff of the County of Cork for that year, he was rendered by his office a conspicuous mark for the enmity of the insurgents. They attacked and burnt Kilcolman, and his infant child (he had been married a year or two before) perished in the flames. The destruction of his home and the loss of his child were evils too terrible to be borne by one of his sensitive temperament. He returned to England, and at the beginning of the next year died of a broken heart.

There is hardly any poet on the subject of whose merits and defects critics have been more unanimous. Their verdict was the same in the next generation that it is now.

His defects are two: first, the ill-judged archaism of his language, which Ben Jonson, while denouncing it as 'Chaucerisms which were better expunged and banished,' declared at the same time that the poet himself did not understand, but that, in affecting to imitate the ancients, he had written what was, in fact, no language at all; and, secondly, the unnatural and unskilful complication of his allegory, which he unconsciously himself condemned when he admitted it to require an elaborate explanation. His merits are more numerous. He, too, like Chaucer, enriched our poetical language with an entirely new metre, which was a variation of what the Italians call *ottava rima*, the fourth and fifth lines rhyming together with the second and seventh, with the addition of a ninth line of twelve syllables (such as Dryden called an Alexandrine) to rhyme with the sixth and eighth; a metre which in the present century one of the greatest of his successors has demonstrated to be a most suitable vehicle for almost every kind of thought, for flowery description, grave meditation, and impassioned declamation. But Spenser's skill as an inventor and employer of a new metre was the least of his gifts. The poet Campbell, with great felicity of comparison, has pronounced him 'the Rubens of English poetry,' explaining his simile by the assertion that 'nowhere shall we find more airy and expansive images of visionary things, a sweeter tone of sentiment, or a finer flush in the colours of language.' He is 'a painter who makes us forget the defect of his design by the beauty of his colouring.' And a still greater poet than Campbell, Gray, was so impressed with the richness of his imagination and the luxuriant beauty of his descriptions, that, as is recorded, he made a practice of reading over a portion of his works whenever he desired to attune his own mind to composition.

A brief quotation will suffice to display the rich imaginative texture of his poetry, and also the extent to which it is obscured to modern readers by the perversity of taste which persisted in expressing his thoughts in language which no one had used for above a century. Una is the daughter of a king whose kingdom is laid waste by a dragon. She is meant, according to the poetical heading which the

poet has prefixed to the third canto, to represent Truth; and the canto opens with her celebrated adventure with the Lion, which has given such abundant employment to painters and sculptors.

(The Faerie Queene, canto iii. stanzas 1-9.)

Nought is there under heav'ns wide hollownesse
That moves more deare compassion of mind,
Then beautie brought t' unworthie wretchednesse
Through envies snares, or fortunes freakes unkind.
T' whether lately through her brightness blynd,
Or through alleageance, and fast fealty,
Which I do owe unto all womankynd,
Feele my hart perst with so great agony,
When such I see, that all for pitty I could dye.

And now it is empassioned so deepe,
For fairest Unaes sake, of whom I sing,
That my frayle eies these lines with teares do steepe,
To thinke how she through guyleful handeling
Though true as touch, though daughter of a king,
Though faire as ever living wight was fayre
Though nor in word nor deede ill meriting,
Is from her Knight divorced in despayre,
And her dew loves deryo'd to that vile Witches shayre.

Yet she, most faithfull Ladie, all this while
Forsaken, wofull, solitarie mayd,
Far from all peoples preace, as in exile,
In wildernesse and wastfull deserts strayd,
To seeke her Knight; who, subtilly betrayed
Through that late vision which th' Enchanter wrought,
Had her abandon'd: she, of nought affrayd,
Through woods and wastnes wide him daily sought;
Yet wished tydinges none of him unto her brought.

One day nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
From her unhastie beast she did alight;
And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay
In secrete shadow, far from all men's sight;
From her fayre head her fillet she undight,

And layd her stole aside: Her angels face,
As the great eye of Heaven, shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did ever mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.

It fortuned, out of the thickest wood
A ramping lyon rushed suddenly,
Hunting full greedy after salvage blood;
Soone as the royall Virgin he did spy,
With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
To have attonce devourd her tender corse:
But to the pray when as he drew more ny,
His bloody rage asswaged with remorse,
And, with the sight amazed, forgat his furious forse.

Instead thereof he kist her wearie feet,
And lickt her lilly hands with fawning tong;
As he her wronged innocence did weet.
O how can beautie maister the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!
Whose yielded pryde and proud submission,
Still dreading death, when she had marked long,
Her hart gan melt in great compassion;
And drizzling teares did shed for pure affection.

'The lyon, lord of everie beast in field,'
Quoth she, 'his princely puissance doth abate,
And mightie proud to humble weake does yield.
Forgetfull of the hungry rage, which late
Him prickt, in pittie of my sad estate:—
But he, my lyon, and my noble lord,
How does he find in cruell hart to hate
Her, that him lov'd, and ever most adord,
As the god of my life? why hath he me abhord?'

Redounding teares did choke th' end of her plaint,
Which softly echoed from the neighbour wood;
And, sad to see her sorrowfull constraint,
The kingly beast upon her gazing stood;
With pittie calm'd downe fell his angry mood.
At last, in close hart shutting up her payne,
Arose the Virgin borne of heavenly brood,
And to her snowy palfry got agayne,
To seeke her strayed Champion if she might attayne.

The lyon would not leave her desolate,
But with her went along, as a strong gard,
Of her chast person, and a faythfull mate
Of her sad troubles and misfortunes hard;
Still, when she slept, he kept both watch and ward;
And, when she wakt, he wayted diligent,
With humble service to her will prepard:
From her fayre eyes he took commandëment,
And ever by her lookes conceived her intent.

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